

# WOMEN'S EDUCATION DES FEMMES

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**WOMEN'S**

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All women are invited to submit articles, ideas, poetry, humor, commentary, reviews, resources, photographs, illustrations or graphics. Send submissions to the Editor, WEdf, 47 Main Street, Toronto, Ontario, M4E 2V6, or fax them to 416/699-2145. Material that is sexist, racist, classist, homophobic, able-ist, age-ist or which is oppressive in any other way will not be accepted for publication. Writer's guidelines are available.

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**WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

**DES FEMMES** est une revue publiée tous les trimestres par le Congrès canadien pour la promotion des études chez la femme. Le CCPEF est un organisme national bénévole chargé de promouvoir l'éducation et le développement du plein potentiel des femmes.

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*When My Mind's on Other Things*  
*both poems by N. V. Bennett*

*While Listening to Courtney Love Last Night*  
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## From the NGO Forum in Huariou

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by Lynn Fogwill

We are  
involved in  
something  
historic and  
we know it.  
Beijing will  
change  
everything.

This part of the UN 4th World Conference on Women is a place of amazement, a kaleidoscope of sounds, sights, smells and feelings. Here in the Media Centre there are close to a hundred computers available for use at no charge to participants. There are women all around me working, as I am: sending messages to loved ones back home, sending news and asking for support work from organizations on the other side of the planet. The atmosphere is one of shared vision and sheer pleasure. We are involved in something historic and we know it.

This is a place of numbers. There are 28,500 women (no one seems really sure) at the NGO Forum, women of all ages, races, languages and national costume. Every day there are more than 400 workshops, plus planarias and cultural events to choose from. Trying to plan which to attend and a strategic route from one to the other across the 40 or 50 hectares of the site is exhausting in itself. But the workshops often have an atmosphere of kitchen table discussion, hunched over with friends and neighbours, engaged in an intense dialogue that matters deeply to us all.

This is a place of rumours. The Chinese police have stocked up on blankets to cover our naked bodies when we go dancing in Tiananmen Square. Women have had their rooms, belongings and papers searched by security police. Australian women, meeting in caucus, were raided and had their meeting shut down because it was in a hotel and not at the "designated" place. The Tibetan exiles are being harassed. There will be a demonstration. ...There was a demonstration. We can rarely assess if these rumours are true.

This is a place of uncomfortable undercurrents and confrontations. Korean women confront Japanese women, telling them to go home. During the Canadian daily caucus : meeting someone yells, "Take that kid out of the tent!" Patiently waiting in line is apparently not a universal nicety. Does sisterhood end here, when yet again a woman elbows her way past me to the front of the queue? I feel ashamed of us all. What happened to our respectfulness for each other? To our support? What happened to "If women were in charge the world would be different"?

Yet this is a place of a global women's movement. The networking begun here will carry on, particularly through this very medium, and it is what will go forward from here that will matter. Beijing will change everything. Women from "North" and "South" have had

the opportunity to share their stories and discover their common issues and concerns. The unbelievably negative impacts upon women of structural adjustment policies, no matter what the structure of the national economy, and the feminization of poverty as a global phenomenon are now understood. The horrific extent and kinds of violence against women have been named. The marginalization of women and girls in education is still very real despite some gains since the first Nairobi conference in 1975.

With the capacity of electronic communications, we can continue to support each other and make common cause. But we must ensure that power relationships are not simply perpetuated through this technology. Unless all women in countries of the South as well as the North and particularly women in small NGOs have access to the technology, we will have betrayed the hope and promise of Beijing.

For CLOW, there is a new possibility for international links. I have had the privilege to connect with women from Australia and Sweden, with whom I discussed on very practical terms our commitment to continue networking post- Beijing. We also spoke hesitantly but hopefully of organizing an international conference of feminist adult educators.

As the theme song of the NGO Forum cried out, "Keep on moving forward, never turning back," so shall we at CLOW.

*Lynn Fogwill resides in the Northwest Territories and is a founding mother of CLOW. She is currently CLOW's president. A fuller article detailing the importance of Beijing, specifically to women's education, will appear in an upcoming issue of WEdf co-authored by Lynn Fogwill and Susan Lafleur.*

## En direct du Forum des ONG à Huariou

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par Lynn Fogwill

Règne une  
atmosphère de  
vision partagée  
et de réel  
plaisir.

Ce volet de la quatrième Conférence mondiale sur les femmes des Nations unies se déroule dans un endroit étonnant, au milieu d'un kaléidoscope de bruits, de scènes, d'odeurs et de sentiments. Ici, au Centre des médias ont été installés près de cent ordinateurs, dont les participantes peuvent se servir gratuitement. Tout autour de moi, des femmes travaillent, comme moi: j'expédie des messages à ceux et celles que j'ai laissés derrière, j'envoie des nouvelles à des organismes à l'autre bout du monde et leur demande leur appui. Règne une atmosphère de vision partagée et de réel plaisir. Nous participons à un moment historique et nous le savons.

C'est un endroit où nous sommes en nombre: 28500 femmes (personne n'est sûr de ce chiffre) au Forum des ONG, des femmes de tout âge, de toutes les races, de toute langue et portant divers costumes nationaux. Tous les jours, plus de 400 ateliers, ainsi que des séances plénières et des manifestations culturelles sont organisées. Essayer de planifier son emploi du temps et de prévoir un itinéraire stratégique pour se rendre d'une activité à une autre dans ce domaine de 40 à 50 hectares est en soi épuisant. Aux ateliers, toutefois, règne souvent la même ambiance que dans une cuisine, où se sont retrouvées des amies ou des voisines.

C'est un endroit bruissant de rumeurs. La police chinoise a fait des réserves de couvertures pour couvrir nos corps nus lorsque nous irons danser sur la Place Tiananmen. La police de sûreté a fouillé les chambres, les effets personnels et les papiers de certaines femmes. Les Australiennes ont été victimes d'une rafle de la police pendant une de réunion. Celle-ci a dû être interrompue, car elle se tenait dans un hôtel, et non dans un lieu "désigné". Les exilées tibétaines font l'objet de harcèlement. Il y aura une manifestation... Il y a eu une manifestation. Difficile d'évaluer la véracité de ces rumeurs.

C'est un endroit empreint d'un léger malaise et témoin d'affrontements. Les Coréennes s'en prennent aux Japonaises, leur intimant de retourner chez elles. Au cours de la réunion quotidienne des Canadiennes, quelqu'un a crié: "Sortez cet enfant de la tente!" Attendre patiemment en file n'est pas la panacée universelle. Est-ce que l'amour entre soeurs s'arrête au moment une femme de plus se fraie un passage au coude à coude pour se planter devant moi dans la queue? J'ai honte de nous toutes. Qu'advient-il de notre respect mutuel? Du soutien que nous prônons? Qu'en est-il de l'énoncé "Si les femmes dirigeaient,

nous vivrions dans un monde bien différent?"

Pourtant, c'est un endroit d'un mouvement mondial de femmes. Les travaux visant à établir des réseaux que nous entamons ici se poursuivront, en particulier par l'intermédiaire de ce même médium. Ce qui compte, c'est ce qui découlera de cette conférence. Beijing changera tout. Des femmes du Nord et du Sud ont eu l'occasion d'échanger des histoires et de découvrir des inquiétudes et problèmes communs. Les répercussions incroyablement négatives sur les femmes des politiques de réajustement structurel, indépendamment de la structure de l'économie nationale, et la féminisation de la pauvreté dans le monde entier sont aujourd'hui comprises. L'étendue de la violence faite aux femmes et toutes les formes de cette violence ont été nommées. La situation marginale des femmes et des filles en matière d'éducation est toujours très réelle, en dépit de certains succès remportés à ce propos depuis la conférence de Nairobi en 1975.

Grâce aux moyens de communication électroniques, nous pouvons continuer de nous soutenir et de faire front commun. Nous devons, toutefois, nous assurer que des rapports de force ne sont pas tout bonnement perpétués par le biais de ces technologies. Si toutes les femmes, celles des pays des hémisphères nord et sud, en particulier celles appartenant à de petits ONG, n'ont pas accès à la technologie, nous aurons trahi l'espoir donné et les promesses faites à Beijing. Pour le CCPEF, il existe de nouvelles possibilités de créer des liens à l'échelle internationale. J'ai eu le privilège de me lier avec des Australiennes et des Suédoises, avec lesquelles j'ai discuté en termes pratiques de l'après-Beijing et de notre engagement d'établir des réseaux. Nous avons également évoqué la possibilité d'organiser une conférence internationale des spécialistes femmes de l'éducation des adultes.

Le CCPEF suivra à la lettre le thème de la chanson du Forum des ONG "Allons toujours de l'avant, jamais à reculons".

*Lynn Fogwill, qui habite dans les Territoires du Nord- Ouest, est l'un des membres fondateurs du CCPEF. Elle occupe à l'heure actuelle la présidence du CCPEF. Un article plus détaillé de Lynn Fogwill et Susan Lafleur sur l'importance de la conférence de Beijing et consacré à l'éducation des femmes paraîtra dans un prochain numéro de Wedf*

## LETTERS

**Dear WEdf:**

We are a small but growing archives that depends on donations. Most of our fund raising efforts must go towards rent and supplies rather than periodicals and books.

It is our hope that progressive publishers would be willing to donate copies of periodicals and other publications to us in the interest of preserving gay, lesbian and feminist history. In exchange, we could offer reviews of journals, etc., to local and national publications.

Thank you for your help,  
**Victoria Ramstetter**  
for the Ohio Lesbian Archives  
4039 Hamilton Avenue  
Cincinnati, OH  
U.S.A. 45223

*[Editor's note: Copies of CLOW publications have been provided to the Ohio Lesbian Archives, and we include this letter as an open request to other organizations and publishers.]*

It is our hope that progressive publishers would be willing to donate copies of publications to us in the interest of preserving gay, lesbian and feminist history.

- Ohio Lesbian Archives

**Dear WEdf:**

I am seeking grant/scholarship information for field investigation in Zambia/Zimbabwe on the theme of "Women's Empowerment in South Africa." Presently I am enrolled as Ph.D. student, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, India.

For the past six years I have also been working with different developmental agencies involved in securing women's and children's rights. In course of my study and work I have gained field experience of villages and slums of seven North Indian States.

If you have information to send me, or would like more information about my work, please contact me.

Sincerely  
**Susmita Singh**  
4D/61, Old Rajendra Nagar  
School Marg

New Delhi 110060  
India

**Dear WEdf:**

Recently I sent you two articles based on experiences of my daughter and my granddaughter. Although you could not use them in your magazine, you took the time and interest to write to me (as opposed to a standard rejection) and suggest two alternate publications. I have sent the articles out to them today.

Thank you most sincerely for your kind words of encouragement. Writing is such a solitary career that any feedback is most welcome. Yours was wonderful and much appreciated.

Sincerely,  
**Maria Coletta McLean**  
Weston, Ontario

# Violence: A Barrier to Our Education

---

by Lisa Bryn Rundle and Nicole Ysabet-Scott

Most of us believe that the right to education, from kindergarten through high school, is fundamental. However, not everyone is able to fully enjoy that right...Women who have lived in violent homes, who have been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, or who have experienced systemic violence..., [do] not receive an education that is safe, empowering, relevant or useful.

*Isolating the Barriers...<sup>1</sup>*

**I**t sparked ideas for both of us immediately. As we read over the proposal for the project we were about to begin, we found ourselves talking excitedly though we had only just met. While we had both worked extensively on violence issues in our personal and public lives, neither of us had ever applied what we knew about the effects of violence to education. Once we began to think and read about these connections, we realized, that violence had affected our own learning, and the learning of women we know, in profound ways. In this article, we will share just some of those original sparks, as well as those subsequent, in the hopes they will ignite the interest and passion of those who understand violence from experience, or those who want to understand for any reason.

Neither of us had ever applied what we knew about the effects of violence to education.

Over the course of this past summer, we worked together to produce a series of booklets and fact sheets to raise awareness about violence as a barrier to women's education. As we began the project, we also began to deal with the numerous feelings it triggered for both of us. Among other things, we felt overwhelmed, angry, sad, frustrated and lucky-lucky because we had an opportunity to make change in an area which has been, and still is, very important to both of us.

Upon realizing the connection between our learning and our experiences of violence, we began to share our stories with each other. As we spoke, the scope of those experiences became broader and clearer. We began to place daily occurrences that we witnessed or experienced, in high school and university, into the larger context of violence as a barrier to women's education. The connections seemed endless.

## *La violence : un obstacle à notre éducation*

par Lisa Bryn Rundle et Nicole Ysabet-Scott

L'été dernier nous avons préparé de concert une série de brochures et de feuilles de données pour sensibiliser davantage les gens au problème que pose la violence en tant qu'obstacle à l'éducation des femmes. Ce projet nous a permis de tracer des liens entre notre apprentissage et notre expérience de la violence. De plus, nous avons échangé des histoires à ce propos. Nous avons inclus certaines de ces histoires dans cet article.

Nous avons d'abord décidé de définir largement le terme «violence». Nous y englobons les abus psychologiques, sexuels, financiers et rituels, ainsi que la discrimination se fondant sur des attitudes sexistes, racistes, hétérosexistes, ainsi que sur celles relevant de l'âgisme et du système de classe. Nous espérons ainsi qu'en élargissant la définition de la violence, des femmes qui n'avaient pas précédemment envisagé leur vécu, ou celui d'une femme qu'elles connaissent, comme violent pourront désormais la faire d'une manière saine et utile. La série comprend deux brochures (une pour les apprenantes et une pour les éducatrices) et trois feuilles de données sur les thèmes suivants : dépistage de la violence, sécurité dans les écoles et façon de réagir lorsqu'une femme divulgue un acte de violence.

Nous estimons que nous avons eu beaucoup de chance de porter à terme ce projet et d'avoir eu la possibilité de contribuer à certains changements dans un secteur qui nous tient à cœur.

"I wonder why  
I feel stupid, I  
wonder why  
learning is a  
struggle. I  
shouldn't  
wonder. "

*I spent four months writing frantic messages to another student on the bathroom walls-she had responded to my gay rights graffiti. She had come out to some of her "friends"; they had raped and beaten her. I could not give her my name or my number, she had no one else to talk to. My powerlessness made me angry. It also made me aware of my isolation. A year as the high school poster child for queerness did not come without risks.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*I am frightened to have a debate, with a man that is. I always feel stupid-the same way I feel when I try to write essays or do anything academic. I fear being accused of irrationality. I feel that if I seem emotional my points become invalid, like maybe I'm just a woman... That phrase, "just a woman," where have I heard it before? From male friends in high school who would joke about how stupid women were or talk about their bodies as degraded, objectified abstractions; or from one of my family members who instructs his small boys not to hurt me because I'm "just a girl" but won't stop invading my personal space himself or from another family member who insults and demeans the women who are close to him but idolizes his son... I wonder why I feel stupid, I wonder why learning is a struggle. I shouldn't wonder.*

One of the first decisions we made about the project was about the definition of the term violence. We felt that violence was more than the physical abuse it is often assumed to be. We included psychological, sexual, financial and ritual abuse, as well as discrimination based on anything including sexist, racist, ableist, heterosexist, ageist and classist attitudes. Although we worked long and hard to come up with this definition- speaking with each other, with other women and sometimes to ourselves- we still find it difficult to state. While writing it out for the booklets, we were concerned about clear language and being understandable, about having a definition short enough to be manageable but also inclusive. We did not want any woman to read our work and feel that whatever she suffered was not valid. The following excerpt from our booklets is what we finally settled on.

## **VIOLENCE CAN BE...**

Violence can be psychological, emotional, physical, spiritual and economic. It can be committed by institutions and/or by individuals; it can also be part of a system of rules and beliefs. Women experience violence differently as a result of oppression based on race, class, age, ability and sexual orientation.

Violence touches each of us in our society. It is something that any woman can experience and many women do.

## **Violence takes the form of:**

- sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise hurtful jokes, comments or course materials
- stereotypes about women with disabilities, women of color, lesbian and bisexual women, women from different ethnic communities or women who speak English as a second language
- exposing children to violence
- stalking
- sexual or racial harassment or assault by anyone including educators and peers
- sexual, physical and ritual abuse by those in positions of power over girls and women
- psychological abuse, such as being told you are stupid or incapable of doing something
- preventing a girl or woman from attending school, sleeping or doing her homework

It was sometimes difficult to maintain a balance between our personal experience and keeping a professional distance.

We hope that through such an inclusive definition of violence, women who have not previously defined their experience or the experience of another as violent will be able to do so in a healthy and helpful way.



*Theresa Wyatt*

As part of our mandate was to create a series that is as relevant and useful to as many different women as possible, we spoke with numerous women about our work and asked for their input. Though most of the women we went to for feedback expressed positive feelings about the definition of violence we were using, we had anticipated some negative responses. However we were not prepared for the hostility we encountered from one respondent who said our work would be very upsetting for people who had worked in this field; that our definition of violence would "set back" violence- prevention initiatives by confusing the issue with racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination; and that if someone were to come to her with this definition of violence she would tell them that "real violence is ugly and awful." This incident served to illustrate how strong feelings can come up in dealing with this highly personal and disturbing topic. It is often difficult to accept others' viewpoints when they have hurtful implications for your own experience. We felt that we knew "real violence" and we were disturbed on a personal level by these criticisms. It was sometimes difficult for us to maintain a balance between drawing from our personal experience as a valuable source of knowledge and keeping a professional distance. Not surprisingly, we discovered that we were not the only ones who faced this difficulty.

We received other criticisms which were less hostile yet still surprising. The most common was "Why violence against women? Why not violence against people?" The answer seemed clear to us and yet, difficult to explain to those who did not agree. Our position is that in writing about violence against women, we are not devaluing the experiences of men and boys, we are simply stating a focus. Women have a different experience of violence than men do. In the same way that individual women experience violence differently because of race, class, culture and many other factors, women experience violence differently from men based on the discrepancy between our social positions. In our male-dominated society, women are disadvantaged both economically and socially. In this context, violent acts that men or boys might resist, women and girls are trained to accept. We also felt that because more general material on violence often excludes or marginalizes women's experience, it was appropriate and necessary to have a woman-focused project.

Once we were clear about the definition we would be using, as well as the approach, we moved on to isolating the most crucial information about a topic that has broad implications. In the excerpt from our booklet for learners on the following page, we list some of the effects of violence, and how these can act as barriers to women's education. The series contains many other sections, including practical suggestions for positive

change and a theoretical framework within which to examine violence,<sup>2</sup> but we feel this section is one of the most important for people to be aware of and to integrate into their thinking about learning and education.

Violence affects every woman differently.

Here are some of the short- and long-term effects of violence that many women have identified. If you are a survivor of violence or are currently living with violence, you may experience some or all of these effects:

**Inability to concentrate:** difficulty listening, distraction, preoccupation.

**Sense of detachment:** spacing out, feeling numb, not being aware of what is going on around you.

**Difficulty in beginning new things or taking risks:** Women who have experienced violence may well lack experience as risk-takers or learners. For good reason, you may fear being punished, humiliated or rejected for making mistakes.

**Tiredness:** Violence may prevent you from sleeping if you are attacked within your home, if you have nightmares or if you are trying to stay awake to protect yourself. Some abusers interrupt women's sleep as part of their pattern of control. Even if a woman gets enough sleep, fatigue may set in sooner for those who have experienced violence. Women with good learning experiences find that learning new things is invigorating and energizing; survivors may find learning draining and tiring even if they are doing well.

**Panic attacks and flashbacks:** As a survivor, you may experience panic attacks which are characterized by faintness, dizziness, shaking or feeling out of control. You may also experience flashbacks to the violence itself or the feelings that the violence caused. Both these reactions can occur at any time and therefore can be extremely disruptive to your learning.

**Negative self-image:** Part of the way that some abusers control their victims is by telling them that they are worthless or stupid. Often women come to believe this about themselves. Girls who witness their mothers being abused are getting a message about their own value as a woman. To learn, you need a belief in your own potential and ability. This is undermined by violence.

**Concern for safety:** You may be concerned about safety in your learning place, while you are traveling back and forth, or while you are at home. This may distract or prevent you from learning.

**Inability to trust:** You may find that you have difficulty trusting people who remind you of your abuser(s). Because of this, you may find it hard to learn with or from these people.

**Health problems:** Survivors of abuse are more likely to suffer depression or other common mental health problems than people who have not been abused. Physical, sexual and psychological abuse can all affect your physical health as well.

If you do not experience all of these effects it does not mean your experience was not violent or hurtful or that it is not affecting your life. Sometimes women bury themselves in work as a form of escape; learning can feel like one of the only positive parts of their lives. Any of

the listed effects, however, could make it hard for you to learn.

Often women experience several of these effects at once. Many times learners who are struggling with the effects of abuse are labeled "slow" or "lazy." This can cause you to stop believing in your own ability to learn. It is important for everybody to recognize violence as a potential source of learning difficulties so that when a woman or girl is experiencing violence she can get help, instead of getting blamed.

"My rapist continued to work on his degree, apparently his marks didn't suffer, apparently he didn't suffer."

We feel that because these barriers are rarely identified, much pain and confusion ensues for survivors. It is important to women that barriers to learning caused by violence be identified, legitimized and understood. It is also important to know that these barriers can be overcome.

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*Seventeen years old and just beginning therapy, I sit in my law class trying to read a case study. Smith vs. Anderson. The plaintiff charges that the defendant's behavior on the night... The plaintiff charges that the defendant's behavior on the night...*

*The plaintiff charges-this is ridiculous, Nicki, focus. The plaintiff charges...*

*The plaintiff charges Oh my god. I stare at the page emptily, tears welling in my eyes, until my wonderful teacher leans over my desk, whispers Are you okay? I can't read it, I tell him. He nods in sympathy, and I tell him again, on the edge of panic now, No, I really can't read it. It doesn't make any sense. He frowns his concern and tells me I can leave if I want to. The rest of the class shifts uneasily and watches as I shove my books into my bag, crying. Later that night, the other women will stop by my room and knock softly, bring me a gentle smile and some tentative words of comfort. I feel unworthy of their support. Maybe I should just drop out again.*

*Three years later, in my first year of university, I am trying to research a paper. It's already late, and getting later by the minute. I sigh, and my friend looks up. "What is it?" he asks. "Nothing, it's just that I can't read this." He winces sympathetically. "Can't focus, eh?" "No," I reply, dull but calm. "I really can't read it. It doesn't make any sense. I'm gonna go make some tea, okay?" He nods, understanding me. I am not the only survivor in his life. His understanding makes it both easier and harder, when I am not trying to explain or justify, I have the space to feel how exhausted I am. I come back upstairs and sit on the bed, and he wordlessly leaves his own work, sits beside me. "Can I touch you?" he asks, and I nod my assent, beginning to cry as he holds me. These are different tears than they were, no longer panicky but sick and tired of feeling sick and tired. Another cup of tea gets cold sitting on the desk. I've thrown out a lot of tea in the last few months.*

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*I wrote my exams that year, my first year in university, about 3 weeks after a man I was dating raped me in my residence room and fell asleep beside me mumbling "Sorry. Go back to sleep." I didn't feel I could tell my profs-what if they didn't believe me, what if they didn't care, what if they looked at me funny or sympathetically or disgustedly for the rest of the year, reminding me each time I entered a lecture that I was the girl-who-got-out-of- exams-' cuz-she-got-raped. I didn't want that; I couldn't handle that. I felt I was close to the edge as it was and I couldn't risk any other upset. I wrote exams but missed a lot of classes. I stared at the same page for hours and learned nothing. I distracted myself any way I could often in a self-destructive way but to others it looked like partying." I guess I really can't handle university level work," I thought. "I guess I don't really belong here or I'm not working hard enough or I'm stupid." My rapist continued to work on his degree, apparently his marks didn't suffer, apparently he didn't suffer.*

*This year will be different I thought as I started my second year. He should be gone. I moved into the residence next door. I didn't have to have my nightmares on the rape site any more; I didn't have to call that same site home or sleep on the stains left by his pleasure. I felt safe. Well, safer than last year, as safe as I can expect to feel as a woman in this society. Then I found out he was living in the residence across the road and taking classes in the same building as I was, at the same time. Attendance was painful, concentration was exhausting, my behavior seemed odd to those around me ... his behavior, though, is socially accepted." Just keep quiet and work harder; don't let him win," I told myself.*

## For Jennifer

Pride Day parade  
your smile brave, you tell me of  
your father's letter  
a closed door in the face of your honesty.  
I stammer a dismay so deep  
it becomes a blunt instrument  
say something no doubt idiotic  
perhaps painful.  
Later I will be sorry, both for your pain & my clumsiness.

If you were mine  
my lover  
my sister  
my friend

I would wrap you in the fierce love that grief demands  
but I am too aware-you are your own  
our only touch, the overlay of words

These fragments of story, spoken or dreamt  
are all that I can give you  
I will sing your song again and again  
till time hears its resounding

Though your world has turned on its axis  
I will be there  
a voice when you wake in the night  
an undispersed corner of sound echoing  
you are alive  
you are alive  
you are alive.

Nicole

## Shower Poem

Sometimes I just don't feel fresh,  
-sometimes I just don't feel-  
I go to the moon.  
It represents me,  
But not what's me about me,  
What's everybody about me,  
And my universal sisters...

They have been there,  
Or they are there.  
They have known it,  
And they have been known.

We've all been *had*.

Baby sister cries and cries.  
We look at the moon and agree,  
No words will ever teach you-who-do-not-know, you-  
who-do-the-knowing,  
With steel tongues,  
Steal.

My sisters know...  
that's why,  
-the moon makes my freshness irrelevant-  
Dank, ancient, seeped with and discharging knowledge,  
Connected to my yonic herstory,  
I play in my ooze and know it is the key to heaven.

Lisa

We believe in the right to a safe, empowering, relevant and useful education. We believe in women.

*And he didn't win. He was never even close. I was the strong one, I was the winner. As the year went on learning became the exhilarating experience it had once been. Knowledge is power; I gained so much in the past two years-some of it unasked for, but all of it valuable.*

The sharing of personal stories and the breaking of one's silence can be the most personal and the most political activity one can do. As part of our research for this project, we collected women's stories through a questionnaire. Reading them was both painful and inspiring. For us, it was the stories of women-known and unknown-that fanned those first sparks and fuelled our commitment to raising awareness about violence as a barrier to women's education. The personal accounts saddened and outraged us while at the same time they inspired awe for the women who shared their stories. Whether or not they have identified themselves this way, they are indeed survivors. Women told us about how they are standing up and fighting back as well as what they are doing with their lives now. When women share truths, it helps us to know more and more that we are not alone. Breaking the isolation that violence can cause is crucial to healing: both personally and societally. We admire the women who have done so and we hope that our stories will in turn help spark other women into action.

Part of the way we both have healed personally is through our writing. We feel we have been able to give back some of what was taken from us, to other women, and to ourselves. On these two pages are examples of these writings that we would like to share.

Again we think about how lucky we feel. We have tried personally, and now professionally, to bring some healing into the world. "Violence is extremely widespread in our society. Every time it occurs it catches more us in a web of negative effects. Even so, there ways of making positive changes. As much as every hurtful act can cause a series of hurts, every positive action can start a chain of healing. We know we have initiated new healing within ourselves and we hope we have done so for others as well. Women can learn, grow, be free, if only there is someone to see our pain without defining us by it and believe in our strength without demanding it. We will take the learning we have done this summer to the rest of our lives, where we teach as well as learn.

Through this project, we have learned about our own strengths. We have learned about the strength of other women. We have had renewed within ourselves a deep grief and anger at the prevalence of violence and the inequalities for women it exposes. We have learned how to give comfort to ourselves and each other, found strength in a common experience and a common hope that women in the future will not share that experience. We have learned that with determination we can make a difference. We believe that the right to a safe, empowering, relevant and useful education is fundamental. We believe in women.

*Lisa Bryn Rundle is a feminist crusader both as a hobby and a career goal. In her formal education, she studies Canadian Studies, Women's Studies and English at the University*

of Toronto. **Nicole Ysabet-Scott** is a feminist and AIDS educator, majoring in English and Women's Studies at Trent University. Her role models include Ani Difranco, Hothead Paisan, and her mom.

Both **Nicole** and **Lisa** worked as researchers and writers at CLOW in Toronto last summer, and together produced a series of booklets and fact sheets entitled "Making Change: Raising Awareness about Violence against Women as a Barrier to Women's Education" (see Resources in this issue). To order this series, contact CLOW in Toronto.

1. Anne Elliott and Patricia Williams, eds. *Isolating the Barriers and Strategies for Prevention: A Kit about Violence and Women's Education for Adult Educators and Adult Learners* (Toronto: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1995): 1.
2. This theoretical framework includes concepts like social permission of male violence, violence as a manifestation of women's inequality, "tools not rules" for violence prevention, "the personal is political," Maslow's hierarchy of needs, educators' responsibilities and women's rights.
3. "An Educator's Guide to Creating Safe Learning" in *Making Change: Raising Awareness about Violence as a Barrier to Women's Education* by Nicole Ysabet-Scott and Lisa Bryn Rundle, with CLOW, 1995.

# Speaking Against Patriarchy: Women in the Catholic School System

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by Joanna Manning

My case concerned the right of Catholic teachers to freedom of expression on controversial issues of the Church.

In a previous article entitled "Criticizing the Pope: A Catholic Teacher's Experience" (Wedf, Fall 1994), I outlined the successful arbitration case I fought against the Metropolitan Separate School Board (MSSB) in Toronto over my removal in 1992 as a teacher of religion. For several years, I had been an outspoken critic of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, specifically on issues related to women and sexual abuse. An article in the *Toronto Star*, in which I was critical of the Vatican's role in obstructing discussion of birth control at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, was the immediate occasion of the disciplinary action against me. In September 1994, I was restored to teaching religion.

The repercussions of my case extend far beyond the four walls of a high school classroom. They involve a veritable web of issues-legal, educational, theological and political-all of which can be explained in the context of what is happening in the global Catholic community at the present time. This article is an attempt to unravel some of that web.

The court proceedings in my grievance eventually led to legal arguments based on the constitution. In his closing summary, counsel for MSSB resorted to what he termed "the unfettered management rights in a denominational system to determine who should teach religion." The rights of denominational schools derive from Section 93 of the BNA Act of 1867. One of the principles of uniting the otherwise disparate colonies of Upper and Lower Canada was to grant respective religious minorities equal religious prerogatives. This concept of religious tolerance entered public discussion at the same time as the idea of mass public schooling.

Section 93 (1) of the BNA Act reads:

*In and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to education, subject and according to the following Provisions:*

*(1) Nothing in any such Law shall prejudicially affect any right or Privilege with respect to denominational schools which any class of persons have by law in the Province at the Union;*

*(2) All the powers, privileges and Duties at the Union by Law conferred and imposed in Upper Canada on the Separate Schools and School Trustees of the Queen's Roman Catholic Subjects shall be the same as are hereby extended to the Dissident Schools of the Queen's Protestant and Roman Catholic subjects in Quebec.*

## *Les femmes dans le système scolaire catholique expriment leur pensée sur le patriarcat*

par Joanna Manning

Cet article traite des questions juridiques, éducatives, théologiques et politiques qu'a soulevées le procès que j'ai intenté au Conseil des écoles séparées du Grand Toronto en 1992 à la suite de mon renvoi comme professeur de religion (voir Wedf, automne 1994), procès que j'ai gagné par arbitrage.

L'Acte de l'Amérique du Nord britannique de 1867 accorde aux écoles catholiques le droit de discipliner ou de renvoyer un enseignant ou une enseignante pour une cause confessionnelle. Ce droit n'est pas annulé par les droits individuels stipulés dans la Charte des droits (y compris la liberté d'expression) bien que récemment plusieurs cas aient remis en question les droits de l'Église. Dans mon cas, la question était de savoir si j'avais attaqué la nature catholique de l'Église en critiquant la papauté la hiérarchie de l'Église ou ses préceptes patriarcaux. Le débat s'est cristallisé, opposant la morale prédominante des conservateurs de droite dans la hiérarchie de l'Église une théologie plus libérale, qui gagne du terrain parmi les laïcs et le système scolaire catholique. En fait, le groupe d'arbitrage s'est prononcé en ma faveur.

Comme beaucoup de mes collègues je pense qu'en notre qualité d'enseignants, nous avons la responsabilité à l'égard de nos élèves et de la communauté de dénoncer les abus de pouvoir dont nous sommes témoins.

All of the cases in Ontario had so far upheld rights of school boards to discipline or dismiss teachers.

In recent years, several cases before the courts have challenged the extent of the jurisdiction the BNA Act gives to Roman Catholic School Boards, particularly as it impinges on the rights of teachers. All of the cases in Ontario have so far resulted in upholding the rights of school boards to discipline or dismiss teachers for denominational cause.



*Nancy Reid*

In the case of *Porter et al.* (1978) for example, the Ontario Appeal Court upheld the right of the Essex County Separate School Board to dismiss two teachers who had contracted civil marriages outside

the church on the grounds that this conduct, which contravened the church teaching on marriage, "publicly and seriously infringed on the denominational rights of the school."<sup>1</sup> As my case was winding down, news came that a case fought by the Ontario English Catholics Teachers' Association (OECTA) against the Dufferin Peel RCSSB had been lost. This involved the status of non-catholic teachers and, in particular, their right to equal opportunity for promotion. The board successfully argued against promoting non-Catholic teachers on the grounds that it would undermine the denominational character of the school.

In my case, the conduct in question was not the kind of lifestyle issue which had previously formed denominational rights cases, such as invalid marriage or pregnancy out of "wedlock," nor was my Catholicism in question. The argument presented by the Superintendent of Personnel was that the articles I had published, critical of the Pope, amounted to a negative influence on the students in my classroom and threatened the Catholic character of my school (though not a whiff of complaint about my teaching had ever surfaced during the course of a twenty year career). In other words, my case concerned the right of Catholic teachers to freedom of expression on controversial issues of the Church.

Catholic teachers' right to freedom of expression, a right guaranteed under the Charter, is not as straightforward as that of their colleagues in the other public system. According to Section 52 (1) of the Charter, any previous law that is shown to be inconsistent with any of the Charter's provisions is of no force or effect. It would appear that there are clear inconsistencies between the powers of denominational school boards and the provisions of the Charter if denominational rights mean that individual freedom of expression can be curtailed. However, Section 29 of the Charter states: "Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational, separate or dissentient schools." Freedom of expression, then, can conceivably be limited if it is seen to interfere with the denominational nature of a school.

In some views, patriarchy is so constitutive of Catholicism that to speak against it threatens the denominational character of the school

Some right-wing groups in the Catholic church argue that any criticism of the Pope or the church hierarchy is tantamount to a serious attack on the teaching of the church. Writers in several right-wing Catholic publications have made-and continue to make-repeated calls for me to be fired. In their view, patriarchy is so constitutive of Catholicism that if a teacher speaks against it, the denominational character of the school is threatened. A more moderate attitude is that the expression of my views is within the legitimate debate presently taking place in the Catholic church on issues such as the role of women, contraception, and mandatory priestly celibacy. Such was the position adopted by the Director of Education of MSSB in his response to the only two letters of protest that were received in reaction the *Toronto Star* articles.



Another case touching on the rights of teachers to freedom of expression outside the classroom was resolved by the courts while mine was in process. The case of Malcolm Ross, a teacher accused of anti-semitism, was adjudicated by the New Brunswick Court of Appeal in 1993. The judgment stated that a teacher's status as a role model did not limit freedom of expression outside the classroom: "True, he [Ross] was a teacher and, as such, his views may be thought to have an authority they might not otherwise achieve. ...Teachers do indeed enjoy a high status in our society and have a unique opportunity

to influence youthful minds. Having said that, however, the sanction, curtailment of Mr. Ross' freedom of expression, must be considered in the context of the evidence. As noted, it has never been suggested that he used his classroom or school property to further his views.<sup>12</sup> Though the substance of Ross' views may be abhorrent, this case is in establishing that opinions expressed by a teacher outside the classroom do not necessarily have a negative impact on students.

Despite this encouraging precedent, my case was in no way straightforward. The public expression of the views I held crystallized the debate between the right-wing conservative ethos prevailing in the church hierarchy and the growing presence and acceptance of a more liberal theology among the laity and in the Catholic school system. Under the influence of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), a more inclusive! vision of the Catholic Church emerged which gave birth to new approaches to Catholicism, open to liberations and feminist perspectives. As a result, many lay people were inspired to undertake serious study of theology and this new generation of theologically sophisticated lay people emerged as the heads of religion departments in Catholic high schools.

There has been a backlash against this from the conservative and right-wing faction of the Catholic church. There is strong suspicion that the two letters received by the Board in reaction to my article were from members of one or another of the right-wing groups that have sprung up in the church with an agenda parallel to fundamentalists in other branches of Christianity. Opus Dei, Campaign Life, Focolare, etc., all share an outlook that is authoritarian in operation, opposed to feminism and gay rights, and strongly suspicious of any kind of collective effort to interfere with free market capitalism. Members of these groups often seek election as school trustees and, in Toronto at least, these reactionary viewpoints are definitely more in sync with the conservative ethos which prevails in the top echelons of the church.

This conservative wave was strengthened with the rise to power of Aloysius Ambrozic, appointed as Bishop of the diocese of Toronto by Pope John Paul II in 1990 (six years after the Davis government passed Bill 30 granting full public funding to Catholic schools). Ambrozic was not the choice that other Canadian bishops had put forward as successor to Emmett Cardinal Carter in the most influential diocese in English Canada. But his conservative views, his rigid adherence to Church rules, and his distrust of the Second Vatican Council and the new liberal theologies made him, in John Paul's eyes, an ideal candidate to crack the whip of orthodoxy in a city viewed in Rome as a hotbed of feminism and gay rights.

In the Catholic school system inequalities are reinforced and legitimized by attitudes fostered within the institutional church.

Ambrozic came to office with a mission and a conviction that, as Bishop, he would have a direct impact on Catholic education in the diocese. In 1986, after a series of brief visits to Toronto Catholic high schools, Ambrozic published a report that was highly critical of the teaching of religion. He described Catholic high school students as "sloppy Catholics well disposed towards their church," and went on to lay the blame squarely on religion department heads. These latter he describes as "infected by the disease of liberal orthodoxy" and concludes that "they have been permitted to run their programs too independently." He also lays bare his suspicion that there is some agitation for a change in the role of women in society as well as in the church; one of his

recommendations for the curriculum is that "girls should be impressed with the importance of motherhood."<sup>3</sup>



Ambrozic also recommended that the Bishop have some rights over the hiring of religion heads and should be allowed unilaterally to dictate religion curriculum for the schools. Previously, the Catholic high schools had been run by religious orders who took vows of obedience to the Bishop. Now that these orders no longer have the personnel to staff the schools, religion heads and religion curriculum are less easily controlled.

But such recommendations not only would infringe on the statutory independence of now publicly funded school boards, but would also undermine the due competence and rightful autonomy of lay Catholic's running of the schools.

In 1987, the newly formed Religion Heads' Subject Council, of which I was then part, supported by OECTA, looked horns with Archbishop Ambrozic on the issues of hiring and curriculum. Even though we were verbally threatened with termination by MSSB administrators, we forced the Archbishop to back down on both issues. A committee of teachers was set up to work in partnership with Ambrozic to produce a new set of curriculum guidelines. I was elected Chair of the Religion Heads council and, as such, was one of two MSSB representatives on this committee.

In 1990, shortly after he took over the diocese, Ambrozic gave a series of interviews with the media in which he outlined his position on women's participation in the church. He stated that God can never be referred to in female terms "otherwise we will end up with a heavenly hermaphrodite."<sup>4</sup> He insisted that the question of women's ordination was not in the books and that girls could not serve at the altar at Mass as this might encourage them to seek to be priests.

Sexual harassment, put-downs of women, jock networks of boys, lack of female role models for girls and other inequalities exist in all school systems. In the Catholic system they are reinforced and legitimized by attitudes like Ambrozic's which are fostered within the institutional Catholic church. By barring women from ordination, by insisting that women cannot represent God to humanity, by refusing to refer to God in all but male language, the Church legislates discrimination against women as part of its very essence as a community.

I immediately tendered my resignation to the curriculum committee, so strong was my conviction that Ambrozic's views were directly harmful to female students in Catholic schools. As long as Ambrozic was bishop, I could not even tacitly associate myself with his opinions by working in any capacity whatsoever for the Archdiocese of Toronto.

It was within this climate, in 1992, that the disciplinary action against me was made, and within which I decided to challenge the board's right to silence me from speaking out against what I regard as abuses in the church. Along with many of my teaching colleagues, I take the view that, precisely in our role as teachers, we have a responsibility to the students in our care and to the wider church community to speak out against the abuses of power we witness.

## POETRY

### Waiting for Morning

Huddled in flowered bathrobe  
present from mother  
making poems, making do  
with your life of drinking  
cold coffee, and the rain  
that keeps announcing itself  
but doesn't show  
and the dream that woke you  
scattered in this artificial dawn  
its few discernable shreds like  
obscured prisms into another life:  
a limb, a breast, a bit of flesh.

Some things cannot be reclaimed:  
The familiarity of your  
body, dreams, sleep,  
the slips in your past.

**Sylvie Bourassa**  
Montreal, Quebec

Such responsibility has been made all the more significant in light of the tragic cases all over Canada of the sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy. The Winter Commission Report from Newfoundland, published in the aftermath of Mount Cashel, makes a direct link between the cover up of abuse and denominational schooling: "The acceptance of patriarchy begins early in the life of Church community members. ...The denominational school experience, while providing in many cases an important experience of community, may also have tended to compound paternalistic and patriarchal attitudes. Some educators spoke of this prevailing climate as a natural breeding ground for abuse's The experience of past mistakes makes it all the more incumbent upon Catholic teachers to speak out today.

Although the arbitration panel eventually ruled in my favour, finding that the Board had disciplined me for political rather than

denominational causes, the skirmish with denominational rights illustrates how far a Catholic school board is prepared to go in asserting its rights over teachers. The Catholic church has often allied itself with the interests of the status quo and the powerful, rather than following the example of Jesus Christ and acting as the advocate of the disempowered. My case illustrates the risks but also the rewards of speaking the truth. It is my conviction that what Gandhi called satyagraha, or the force of truth, will eventually prevail

In these tumultuous times, when inherited denominational rights of Catholic school boards clash with the individual rights of teachers and subvert the aspirations of women in church and society, it is my hope that the victory gained for all Catholic teachers by my case will empower all of us to work for a better world for all our children.

*Joanna Manning is a secondary school teacher with the Catholic School Board of Metropolitan Toronto.*

I take the view that we have a responsibility to students to speak out against the abuses of power we witness.

1. Quoted in "School Law," The OECTA Reporter, Vol.4 No.3, November 1978.
2. Robert G. Keel, "Freedom of Speech in and Out of the Classroom," *Edu-Law Bulletin*, #37, January 1994.
3. Aloysius Ambrozic, *Report on the Pastoral Visitation in the High Schools in the Archdiocese*, October, 1985.
4. Interview reported in *The Catholic Register*, April 28, 1990.
5. Archdiocese of St. John's, NF, *Report of the Archdiocesan Commission of Enquiry into the Sexual Abuse of Children by Members of the Clergy*, Vol. 1, June 1990.

## POETRY

### Nightmare Men

My sister's breath shines moisture upon the blade  
it quivers in anticipation.  
If she should say just one more word,  
but she is muted by fear and fear itself is her master.

She dreams of husbands, fathers, men of steel  
slicing her face to ribbons.  
Laughing at the irony of her tortured face  
her stony tears hold no sounds and it angers them.  
Quench their moods with shots of scotch,  
now she'll never leave, for who would want a face like that?

Tears of blood shed by us, enough to fill a bathtub their  
remains are swirls of red anger.  
For there was a time when we were beautiful  
before men ripped us apart.

Late at night

mothers, daughters, wives.  
Sew the drunken men into their sheets  
leave the gas on high on the stove and leave.  
Toss the match watch  
the men of steel melt to pathetic puddles.

**N.V Bennett**  
Victoria, B.C.

### **When my Mind's on Other Things**

I can't sense the dripping of  
warm blood on thick carpets, I'm funny that way when  
my mind's on other things.  
It soaks up the room with atmosphere and I can't sense it,  
the way blood smells, earthy, but it might be the dog or something else.  
  
I should know, the carpet's turning all scarlet and I'll have to remember  
to use the other cleaner, attend to it quickly, when I think of it.  
The border of scarlet framed in that nice persian grey. My best colors,  
I should try to remember to wear that for work someday.  
  
I can't sense the moans, and the dishwasher's giving up the ghost, it's  
screaming in the kitchen.  
  
I guess I'll have to break down and wash the damn knife by hand.

## **Academic Freedom and Diversity in Canadian Universities**

*This paper was presented at the Canadian Studies Conference on "The  
Canadian University in the Twenty-first Century, " St. John's College, the  
University of Manitoba, October 14-16, 1994.*

**D**uring the last three decades, the universities in Canada as in other Western industrial states have experienced considerable change in the composition of their student body, teaching and administrative staff. Traditionally marginalized groups such as women, racial and ethnic minorities, and economically disadvantaged classes have gained more visibility on the campus and it is likely that this trend of diversification will intensify. The

demographic composition of Canada is becoming more heterogeneous, and thus the demand for access to higher education from diverse communities is growing.

Conservative forces argue that the pursuit of diversity in curriculum, hiring, teaching, research and student admissions violates academic freedom.

Canadian universities have collected data on the representation of "visible minorities," "women," "Aboriginal Peoples," and "people with disabilities" among their faculty and administrative staff since 1986 as a result of the Employment Equity Act and the Federal Contractors Program.<sup>1</sup> The data on the student population do not contain such a breakdown. Certain institutions, such as York University and University of Toronto, have initiated the collection of representation data among their student population.<sup>2</sup> The Employment and Educational Equity Committee of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) also initiated a pilot survey of all applicants through the Ontario Universities' Application Centre, in 1993.

Diversification of the student population has occurred largely due to pressures from sources external to the university, i.e., as a result of popular struggles such as the civil rights movement, women's movement, Native people's movements, the environmentalist and peace movements and gay men and lesbian women's struggle for their equal rights. Internally, too, the student movement of the 1960s and the 1970s acted as a powerful source of change. In spite of initial resistance, the state and the universities have both shown flexibility in meeting these challenges. The result has been the introduction of extensive (though superficial) changes in the life of the academy. Gender and race relations on the campus, curriculum, teaching, institutional structure, and planning have all been affected. New curricula such as women's studies, ethnic studies, multiculturalism, Native studies, peace and conflict studies, and environmental studies have been established. Hiring policies and practices have been modified and a number of administrative measures were introduced in order to facilitate the integration of these groups. Some of these measures include the establishment of offices of sexual harassment, race relations, employment and educational equity, status of women, and, more recently, human rights.

## *Liberté universitaire et diversité dans les universités canadiennes*

par Shahrzad Mojab

On entend en général par liberté universitaire, le droit du corps professoral d'enseigner et d'effectuer des recherches sans que l'administration de l'université, l'État, le public ou quiconque ne s'immisce dans ces activités. Cette notion de liberté prive les principaux intéressés de l'université, soit les étudiantes et étudiants, les groupes minoritaires, les femmes ou le personnel, du droit de participer à la réforme de l'enseignement supérieur, aux programmes d'études, aux méthodes d'embauche, aux critères d'admission. etc.

Selon les tenants du conservatisme, une réforme se fondant sur l'équité et la diversification des programmes d'études équivaut à une grave infraction de la liberté

universitaire et fait peser une menace sur la civilisation et la culture occidentales. et article soutient que les efforts déployés actuellement par les groupes marginalisés en faveur de la diversification s'inscrit dans la longue lutte menée pour démocratiser l'université.

The tradition of excellence in higher education is threatened, the argument goes, by opening universities to under-represented groups.

The introduction of these reforms has intensified the conflicts within the system of higher education; resistance has come from a variety of sources. Opponents of diversification have resorted to means ranging from physical force (in the United States, the National Guard was mobilized to accompany the first Black student into a Southern campus) to philosophical and legalistic arguments against what is called "preferential treatment," "discriminatory hiring," and the "quota system." The December 6th massacre in Montreal reminds us that even today overtly coercive measures aimed at exclusion are still possible,<sup>3</sup> but for the most part the struggle continues in a more subtle way in the form of debates centered on "political correctness,"<sup>4</sup> economic policy, and legislative and administrative action.

Conservative forces have been on the offensive since the early 1990s, arguing that the pursuit of diversity in curriculum, hiring, teaching, research and student admissions violates academic freedom - in other words, the freedom to create and disseminate White, male-dominated, middle-class and Eurocentric knowledge, which is equated with "Western civilization and culture." The tradition of excellence in higher education is threatened, the argument goes, by opening the universities to under-represented groups. For instance, the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship maintains that the "quality of education is bound to be seriously eroded as considerations of merit - i.e., qualifications and competency - are subordinated to the simplistic demographic requirements."<sup>5</sup> One academic compares "equity codes and proceedings" and equity officers with the Inquisition and Inquisitors.<sup>6</sup>

*Courtesy of Varsity files.*



Students sit in at the office of the University of Toronto President.

Conservatives everywhere have put the dismantling of equity programs on their agenda. In Ontario the leader of the provincial Tories, who recently assumed power, has promised to dismantle the province's Employment Equity Act; in California the state university system, which is one of the largest higher educational institutions in the U.S., recently voted against the continuation of its affirmative action program.<sup>7</sup> In both Canada and the U.S., the issue has been debated in radio and television talk shows and other popular media, the argument being that equity costs the taxpayer and is a drag on the economy. Much of this discourse is, however, demagogical in so far as research indicates that

inequity has serious economic consequences.<sup>8</sup>

The new wave of conservative attack against change in higher education must be understood and analyzed within the context of shifting demographics, competition over ever shrinking resources, and the demand for more representation of marginalized groups in subjects of academic inquiry. The scholarship of conservatives such as Allen Bloom,<sup>9</sup> Dinesh D'Souza<sup>10</sup> and Roger Kimball<sup>11</sup> in the United States and, in Canada, of John Fekete<sup>12</sup> as well as of supporters of the Society for Academic Freedom, is not simply focused on the preservation of the traditional "Western" curriculum. These academics claim that any challenge to their monopoly of knowledge amounts to the subversion of democracy and freedom.<sup>13</sup>

The limited diversity achieved so far has introduced certain changes in academic life, but it has not transformed the balance of forces on the campus.<sup>14</sup> It is true that universities have shown flexibility in opening their doors to women and other marginalized groups; many universities advertise themselves as equal opportunity institutions committed to fair practice of hiring, recruiting, retention and promotion. However, such flexibility may not be solely due to their own motivation. Universities are involved in training highly skilled labour, the largest employer of which is the state. When the state responds to social forces agitating for change and enacts legislation, however cosmetic, to promote equity, it becomes moral and even desirable to train members of marginalized groups who may then enter the capitalist job market.

What may be called Western culture is in fact limited to the culture of the most powerful social class.

Problems emerge when feminists demand a radical break with male dominated social sciences, when environmentalists demand the creation of a body of knowledge necessary for the protection of the environment, when gays and lesbians demand a curriculum sanctioning the changing of family structures. These demands amount to a radical change not only within the universities but between these institutions and society. Meeting these demands requires the transformation of universities into inclusive institutions.

Inclusivity I define as the incorporation of alternative knowledge capable of transforming the status quo. For example, an inclusive business school would accommodate the interest of Native peoples in maintaining their self-sufficient hunting, fishing and farming economies. An inclusive agricultural school would conduct research and train students to engage in sustainable organic farming. Inclusive departments of economics would conduct research on alternative forms of economic organization such as non-profit, cooperative, mixed, socialist or self-sufficient production and distribution systems. An inclusive educational institution would promote the feminization of knowledge, and advocate equality.

Often the conservative argument is put forward that demands for inclusivity amount to a challenge to established traditions of Western culture. Western culture is, however,

diverse. What may be called Western culture is in fact limited to the culture of the most powerful social class which commands the market and regulates gender and race relations. For example, organic agriculture is as Western as insecticide-based large-scale farming. For that matter, gender and race equality is also as Western as male-dominated and racist relations. Thus, the question is not the conflict between a non-Western tradition and a Western culture. The question is, rather, the demand of marginalized groups for radical change to the status quo.

In the same vein, conceptualizing diversity as a negation of academic freedom is equally problematic. Academic freedom, conceived as it commonly is as the exclusive right of faculty to freedom of speech, is extremely limited. If the universities are to be democratized, then freedoms, whether academic or non-academic, must be extended to the whole university community, especially to students. Students and faculty members with alternative views must participate in reforming the university. Academic freedom has to incorporate the right of students, faculty and staff to challenge existing power relations, otherwise it exists merely as a facade to protect the interests of those in authority.

The conflict over issues of diversity is not easy to resolve. The forces involved in this struggle are no longer sharply divided into marginal versus central groups. Both the centre and the margin are divided along ideological and political lines. Advocates of marginal and mainstream positions are found in both mainstream and marginalized groups. In the last three decades, members of marginalized groups have been able to develop bodies of knowledge which are credible, challenging and vigorous and which have been adopted by previously mainstream academics. For instance, feminist research has offered a serious critique of the male nature of social sciences and the humanities, and this body of knowledge has motivated members of both genders to subvert disciplines constructed by white, male, Eurocentric, middle-class scholars. And while marginalized groups have been the motivating force behind these changes, some of their members advocate the ideology of the centre. It would be more appropriate, therefore, not to reduce the current struggle to a conflict between clean-cut camps. The social base for diversity is now broader than ever before.

At the end of this century, institutions of higher education again experience a crisis that will lead toward a radical rupture with the past.

Universities are *not* ivory towers. They are an integral part of the existing social and economic order. Responding to social movements for equality and justice, the Canadian state has pushed universities to adopt employment equity policies and practices, and has provided limited incentives for more inclusive interventions such as women's access to traditionally male dominated fields of study. However, the state has also promoted the establishment of stronger ties between these institutions and a market that is dominated by powerful economic and financial monopolies. Under the circumstances, academic institutions are in a difficult position to promote diversity and, as long as their survival depends on it, will continue to favor monopolies of knowledge enhancing the capitalist economy.

The university and society change constantly. This means that academic life, including the question of freedom, will change. The current debate on academic freedom is not inspired by a desire for enhancing or even protecting the democratization of higher education. It is motivated by conservative forces seeking to defend the academic traditions of the past, and is determined by an attack on diversity and the struggle for democratization under the rubrics of "political correctness." Academic freedom is then held up as endangered by the forces seeking to change the existing relations of power.

Although the conservative offensive is backed by powerful market forces, it is unlikely to succeed in the long run. We can learn some lessons from history. The universities, which were initially in the grip of the church and the aristocracy, were able to free themselves in spite of relentless repression. The struggle for secularization of knowledge was bound to succeed as the social bases of the student population and faculty changed steadily. Members of other classes and women entered the academy; new perspectives and new disciplines replaced the metaphysical world view. Now at the end of this century, the institutions of higher education again experience a crisis that entails change and leads toward a radical rupture with the past.

For those who advocate democratization of the system, engaging in this process of change is challenging. We should enhance the diversity of perspectives, dare to innovate, and struggle for an inclusive academic freedom that allows us to change the system. Faculty and students must both enjoy the academic freedom to engage in sound scholarship that aims at contributing to justice, equality and democracy. We do have the knowledge, the human and natural resources to eliminate poverty and injustice. If we fail to do so, it is to a large extent a failure of our higher education. And at the heart of this failure is the lack of genuine academic freedom.

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1. The Federal Contractors Program requires employers with more than 100 employees who bid on federal contracts valued at \$200,000 or more to comply with the principles of the Federal Employment Equity Act, proclaimed in August 1986. Canadian universities are among the signatories to the program.
2. See, for example, Found, Wm. C. "Who are York's Undergraduates?: Results of the University's 1991 comprehension student survey," and Found, Wm. C. and De Cuyper, Sheila, "Women and Men at York: A gender analysis of the University's 1991 undergraduate survey." Both surveys were prepared for the Office of the Vice-President (Institutional Affairs), York University.
3. The December 6 (1989) murder of fourteen female engineering students at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal by a man claiming to hate feminists was extreme and brutal and in some ways a direct response to the diversification of the student population.
4. Conservative perspectives are found in the works of Bloom, D'Souza, Kimball, and Fekete (see below). For a critique of their positions and alternative perspectives, see, among others, Stephen Richer and Lorna Weir (eds.), *Beyond Political Correctness: Toward and Inclusive University*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995; The Chilly Collective (eds.), *Breaking Anonymity: The Chilly Climate for Women Faculty*, Waterloo: Ontario, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995.
5. Allan Nelson, "Bill 79: 'Employment Equity' comes to Ontario," *Society for Academic Freedom & Scholarship Newsletter*, No.2, November 1992, p.3.
6. P .A. Sullivan, "The role of equity officers," *University Affairs*, June-July 1995, p.16.
7. Andrew Glyn and David Miliband, *Paying for Inequity: The Economic Costs of Social Injustice*. London: IPPR/Rivers Cram Press, 1995.
8. Scott Jaschik, "U. of California to limit racial preferences in admissions, hiring," *The Chronical of Higher Education*, July , 1995, p. A25.
9. Allen Bloom *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986.
10. Dinesh D'Souza *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*. New York: Free Press, 1991.
11. Roger Kimball *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Corrupted our Higher Education*, New York: Harper & Row, 1990.
12. John Fekete *Moral Panic: Biopolitics rising*. Montreal: Robert Davies Publishing, 1995.

13. For a critique of conservative perspectives, see Debra L. Schultz, *To Reclaim a Legacy of Diversity: Analyzing the "Political Correctness" Debates in Higher Education*, a publication of the National Council for Research on Women, 1993; Valeri L. Scatamburlo, *Critical Pedagogy, Political Correctness and the Media*, unpublished Masters thesis, Department of Communication Studies, University of Windsor 1994, p. 163-242; and Barbara Yitsch, "Political Correctness (or, how to fish and cut bait)," *Women's Education des femmes*, vol.10 no.2, pp. 22- 25.
14. For information on the current situation in some universities, see Misao Dean, "Shock troops on campus," *Canadian Forum*, July-August 1995, Vol. LXXIV, No. 841, pp. 14-19; Victor Dwyer, "The biggest chill: Two universities confront sexual discrimination," *Maclean's*, July 1, 1995, p. 61.

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# Womanhood, Deviance and Reform: Women's Rehabilitation in Prison

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by Julia Wilkins

Female criminals must "first of all be taught to be women and must learn all household duties. "

The belief that women who commit crime have strayed from their traditional roles influences the sentences they receive in court and the way they are treated in prison. Programs in prison are designed to rehabilitate women to acceptable states of womanhood and while the roles of wife, mother and homemaker are reinforced, women's diverse problems and needs are overlooked.

Since one of the main reasons women commit crime is economic need, such programs are clearly misdirected. The majority of women in prison have limited means and are the sole supporters of their families. Poor, uneducated, unskilled, marginally employed women continue to be over-represented in penal institutions; having little education and poor job skills prior to imprisonment, their problems are likely only to intensify upon release. If prisons are to assist women in overcoming poverty and becoming reintegrated as functioning members of society, training programs must provide them with skills which help them obtain jobs that make a real difference to their lives.

Historically, men and women have been treated differently by the criminal justice system. In the United States, this dates back to colonial times when female offenders were considered to be evil, fallen women and a threat to social order and national stability.<sup>1</sup> Women were consequently treated more harshly than men. They were incarcerated under deplorable and unsanitary conditions until the late 19th century when, under pressure from reform movements, separate institutions for women were established. These were designed to simulate a homelike environment and had the specific aim of helping women become "ladylike" and accept appropriate female behavior.<sup>2</sup>

Reformers believed that fallen women could only be uplifted by applying domestic arts to correction. Josephine Shaw Lowell, among other nineteenth century reformers, maintained that female criminals must "first of all ... be taught to be women ... and ... must learn all household duties."<sup>3</sup> The Women's Prison Association of New York explained that "a Home is the very heart of the undertaking on behalf of female convicts,"<sup>4</sup> Rehabilitation within the new institutions consequently focused on traditional homemaking skills such as cooking, laundry, sewing, cleaning, and practical nursing.<sup>5</sup> While these correctional facilities did improve the treatment of incarcerated women, they also reinforced and perpetuated women's stereotypical gender roles. It is against this historic background that the treatment and programming for women in prison has evolved.

## *Féminité, déviance et réforme: La réadaptation des femmes dans les prisons*

par Julia Wilkins

La croyance selon laquelle les femmes qui commettent un crime se sont écartées de leur rôle traditionnel exerce une influence sur les peines auxquelles sont condamnés et sur la façon dont elles sont traitées en prison. À l'époque des colonies, on estimait que les contrevenantes faisaient peser une menace sur l'ordre social et sur la stabilité nationale. Selon les réformateurs du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, on pouvait "perfectionner" les femmes incarcérées en leur enseignant les arts domestiques et en leur apprenant à tenir correctement le rôle qui leur incombait.

Résultat de ce genre de raisonnement: beaucoup de femmes dont les besoins sont tout autres finissent dans un système carcéral qui se contente de perpétuer leur situation, alors qu'elles sont déjà défavorisées. Dans les prisons, on tente coûte que coûte de féminiser les femmes; on les pousse à maigrir, à faire pousser leurs cheveux et à se maquiller, à adopter des comportements féminins et à être hétérosexuelles. Les programmes de formation ont tendance à mettre l'accent sur les soins de beauté, les services d'alimentation le secrétariat ou les travaux de bureau. Les femmes incarcérées n'ont pas besoin de leçons dans l'art de la domesticité ou sur le comportement qu'elle doit afficher en tant que femmes, mais de cours de formation axés sur des compétences qui leur permettront à leur sortie de prison de trouver des emplois stimulants.

Idealized notions of true womanhood continue to determine how women are treated and the type of educational and vocational opportunities open to them.

Today in America, idealized notions of true womanhood continue to underlie the evaluation of female offenders in court and influence the type of punishments they receive. In the institutions themselves, these attitudes determine how women are treated, the type of educational and vocational opportunities open to them, and extend beyond this into release, influencing parole decisions.

It is apparent that findings of past research such as Simon's,<sup>6</sup> which suggest that judges were chivalrous and consequently more lenient in their sentencing of women, are no longer valid. Stiff penalties are now commonplace for women, who are increasingly being imprisoned for crimes which would previously have resulted in non-custodial disposals. As a result, the number of women inmates nearly tripled in the last decade.<sup>7</sup> This is due, to a large extent, to the harsher sentences women are now receiving for drug related offenses. In fact, it has been argued that the "war on drugs" had become a war on women and has contributed to the explosion in the women's prison population. In California, the state with the most female prisoners, the number of incarcerated women increased by more than 400% between 1980 and 1995, from 1,316 women in 1980 to 8,231 as of February 1995.<sup>8</sup> Over a third of the women were convicted for possession of drugs or for

marijuana offenses, indicating that the majority of women in prison for drug related offenses were not engaged in high-level drug trafficking, but were couriers, intermediaries, or users.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, increasingly punitive responses to drug offenses accounts for a large part of the dramatic growth in the female prison population.<sup>10</sup> Based on a comprehensive survey of women in all state facilities, a recent study found that "...women are substantially more likely than men to be serving time for a drug offense and less likely to have been sentenced for a violent crime" (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994). In fact, the proportion of women imprisoned in state prisons for violent offenses actually dropped during the 1980s; in 1979, 48.9% of the women in prison were incarcerated for violent offense; by 1986, this figure had fallen to 40.7%.<sup>11</sup>

It is clear that the way men and women are sentenced is often related to the way they are perceived in court, rather than the seriousness of the crime itself. While men are typically evaluated by legal factors such as previous convictions and the actual offense, women are generally judged by their social circumstances, with the offense playing only a secondary role in determining their guilt.<sup>12</sup> Women who are considered "deviant" in some aspect of their social life are often sentenced more severely than those considered "respectable."<sup>13</sup> Studies indicate, that family composition is significant and women who are married receive milder punishments than those who are single, as do women with children compared to those who are childless.<sup>14</sup> Also, although probation officers consider family responsibilities in deciding how to deal with, male and female offenders, for men the main consideration is their wage-earning role, while for women it is their domestic role.<sup>15</sup>

The ideologies from which these distinctions stem stress traditional values of women's place in the home and view any form of deviance from this ideal as threat to society. If female offenders are believed to have strayed from their expected roles they have not only committed a crime by breaking the law, but also the crime of not conforming to their female gender-role stereotypes.<sup>16</sup> For this double offense, only one solution is considered appropriate rehabilitation to an acceptable state of femininity. This involves learning to be "proper" women; in other words, being pure and submissive as wives, mothers and homemakers.<sup>17</sup> The appropriate place for this rehabilitation to occur is believed to be within an institution such as prison where all aspects of the regime can be geared towards this goal. Once incarcerated, the socio-economic backgrounds of the women and the communities to which they will return are ignored. They are offered no constructive help in altering their preincarceration situations, though it is assumed that upon release they will be ready to return to society as stable, self-supporting contributing members.<sup>18</sup>

Seventy-six per cent of female offenders in state correctional facilities do not have a high school diploma.

It is a result of this type of reasoning that many women, whose needs clearly lie elsewhere, end up in a prison system that does nothing more than perpetuate their already disadvantaged position. Although prison is perceived as the institution in which women can be reformed, the process of such reformation is generally counterproductive, resulting in more women finding it necessary to reoffend. On release from prison, women who were already living on the margins of society find themselves faced with the additional problems of poverty, homelessness and unemployment, while having few employment skills. A recent study found that more than half of the women surveyed had co-existing mental health and substance abuse problems.<sup>19</sup> For such women, post-release support is particularly important for adequate reintegration into society.

Finding suitable housing is often a primary concern, particularly for women who need to change location to escape a certain lifestyle, possibly involving pimps and drug dealers. However, affordable housing is beyond many women's reach and homeless offenders not only have a much higher reconviction rate but homelessness itself is often used as a justification for imposing a custodial sentence.<sup>20</sup> Women who do have homes often live in poverty. It is estimated that the typical young single-parent renter pays 81 % of her income on housing.<sup>21</sup> Of female-headed families with children, two-thirds are renters and they are more than three times as likely to be below the poverty line than other renter families with children.<sup>22</sup> As 79% of women in prison have one or more children and are the sole supporters of their families,<sup>23</sup> they are likely to be among this category of the poor.

Many women also have difficulty gaining employment. This is due not only to a general unwillingness to employ women with a criminal record and a history of institutionalization, but also because of the low educational levels of the women themselves. Seventy-six per cent of female offenders in state correctional facilities do not have a high school diploma.<sup>24</sup> It has been estimated that by the turn of the century, only 14% of all jobs will be suitable for people with less than a high school education.<sup>25</sup>

Many women also have limited job experience, most of which has been concentrated in the unskilled, minimum wage sector. Prior to incarceration, sixty-three per cent of women earned, as their highest hourly wage, between \$3.35 and \$6.50 (U.S.) per hour.<sup>26</sup> On release from prison, they may have difficulty obtaining jobs paying even these wages. If the strains of living a life of poverty become too much, crime may be seen as the only solution. Crime is not perceived as a voluntary choice, but a necessary evil when the alternative for these women is being unable to feed, clothe and house themselves and their children.<sup>27</sup>

The prison system's aim in attempting to reform such women is therefore clearly misdirected. The traditional view that women should be in the home fulfilling the roles of homemakers and child-rearers results in a situation where the training given to women

prisoners sharply diverges from their needs in reality. Inside prison, women are subjected to extensive attempts to feminize them so that they will return to society displaying "correct" female behavior. They are encouraged to be "normal" which entails losing weight, being feminine and being heterosexual. In terms of appearance, they are encouraged to grow their hair, use make-up, and wear feminine clothing such as dresses, skirts and bras.<sup>28</sup> In terms of education, the emphasis continues to be placed on traditional "women's subjects" with vocational training focused primarily on cosmetology, food services, secretarial or office training.<sup>29</sup> Traditionally, the only job opportunities available for women inside prisons have been kitchen work, cleaning, and minor clerical work.

Eighty-two per cent of women in prison feel that in order to get the kind of job they want they need more education and more experience.

Changes have been slow, despite litigation and decades of research. In the early 1970s, the average number of programs in men's prisons was 10 compared to 2.7 in women's prisons, and while male prisoners had a choice of fifty different vocational programs, women's choices were limited to cosmetology, clerical training, food services, and training as nurse's aides.<sup>30</sup> Litigation emerged in the 1980s in at least twelve states regarding educational and vocational programs for women.<sup>31</sup> But a national study at that time showed that work programs for women still emphasized cosmetology, clerical skills and food service.<sup>32</sup>

Another study found a broader range of vocational programs in women's institutions, including: welding, marine electrical, auto mechanics, upholstery, drapery making, ADP keypunch, clerical, college, cosmetology, and cleaning services.<sup>33</sup> However, the overwhelming majority of training given to women prisoners today continues to be in skills that reinforce traditional roles.<sup>34</sup> In a recent study it was found that only 12% of women in female institutions were involved in education programs, vocational courses or work training.<sup>35</sup>

What imprisoned women need are not lessons in domestic skills and appropriate gender-role behavior, but education and training in skills that will help them obtain meaningful and rewarding work in the paid labour force. Many incarcerated women suffer from lack of marketable skills, negligible job experience, and limited education. Eighty-two per cent of women in prison themselves feel that in order to get the kind of job they want on release, they would need more education and more experience.<sup>36</sup> They are also aware that traditional jobs for women do not generally pay enough to support themselves and their children, so many would welcome programs training them for construction or trade work.<sup>37</sup> Work training is therefore seen by women inmates as the single most needed program, followed by college courses and vocational courses.<sup>38</sup>

For women who have a high school education, college courses can be a viable option. Many community and junior colleges now offer a wide variety of two year, job-oriented degrees such as business education, horticulture, and computer sciences,<sup>39</sup> and job

assignments in these areas can provide women with hands-on work experience while still incarcerated. Recent studies correlate higher education and recidivism, showing a lower rate of recidivism among inmates who participated in college courses.<sup>40</sup>

However, because of the relatively short sentences of female offenders, many programs for women are not adequately integrated into the prison system. The Women's Development Unit Project, a federally funded rehabilitation program which began operations in the seventies, illustrates the type of ill-planning that often goes into programs designed for women. The aim of the project was to prepare women for release into the community by offering group counseling, vocational guidance, schooling, vocational training, and help in obtaining social security cards, housing, welfare and Medicaid benefits. However, the only vocational training program available was typing. As the average inmate had a sixth-grade reading level, few women could learn to type well enough to gain employment on release.<sup>41</sup>

It is important for those serving short sentences that programs are designed to realistically meet their needs and that they... are fast paced and intensive. Because programming funds are often limited, it is also important that different kinds of low-cost programming are explored. Computer-based vocational programs, combined with hands-on practical applications, are one cost effective way of delivering accelerated vocational training. These programs also allow for self-paced instruction, thereby addressing the academic diversity of inmates. The expanded use of community volunteers is another effective way of keeping costs down and it has been found that the prisons with the best programs for women have an active network of volunteers.<sup>42</sup> While there are countless other possibilities to be explored, access to programs is often limited. Many prison administrators admit that they focus their programming resources on women who will be in jail long enough to complete specific programs, and some restrict enrolment due to issues such as seniority. Also, work release is generally only available to women who have been convicted and sentenced, have a moderate amount of time left to serve, and are low risks in terms of the seriousness of their offense and likelihood of escape.<sup>43</sup>

Women's social and economic rehabilitation is clearly a complex issue. There are many factors to be taken into account including the academic diversity of inmates, differing lengths of sentences, and resources available. However, the most important issue for programs to address is the way they relate to the economic realities that confront women when released. Regardless of planning and accessibility, programs will only be successful and deter women from reoffending if they are based on the reality of women's needs, rather than stereotypical gender expectations.

Programs will only be successful if they are based on the reality of women's needs, rather than stereotypical gender expectations.

Imprisoning those already living on the margins of society can have snowballing effects long after release, often resulting in women finding it necessary to reoffend. Women need to be provided opportunities within the prison system to learn new skills that will enhance their employment potential and enable them to support themselves and their families. Such programs are imperative if women are to break away from the revolving door syndrome and lead self-sufficient, productive lives on release from prison.

*Julia Wilkins* conducted her master's research in England and her thesis subject was women in prison. She is currently teaching in Buffalo, NY. Her previous publications include *Math Activities for Young Children: A Resource Guide for Parents and Teachers*, MacGraw-Hill, 1995, and *Young Children and Random Learning*,

*"Scholar and Educator*, vol. XVII, no. 3-4, Fall 1995-Spring 1996.

## POETRY

### While Listening to Courtney Love\* Last Night

I  
pick up an  
electric  
bass

hang it around  
my shoulder

heavy heavy board  
cold against my thighs -  
stroke  
meaty strings

immediately  
like masturbating

love it

explains  
a lot-  
why  
men are

intimate,  
wild with  
guitars-

pure  
sex

say to  
Mikel  
feel like a guy-  
the guy part  
of me  
is coming out  
she  
says no  
it's because  
you haven't seen  
enough  
women  
guitar players.

Yah.

**Monica Grant**  
Maple Ridge, B.C.

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# Notre passé plein de richesses actuelles : La reconnaissance des acquis pour les femmes <sup>1</sup>

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par Monique Hébert

Tout au long  
de notre vie,  
on apprend  
plein de  
choses.

1. *Cette communication a été donnée le 18 mai 1995, dans le cadre de l'Assemblée générale annuelle de Pluri-elles, organisme franco-manitobain de femmes.*

2. *Marthe Sansregret, La reconnaissance des acquis, Montréal, Hurtubise hmh, 1985, p.19.*

**J'**ai intitulé cette conférence **Notre passé plein de richesses actuelles: La reconnaissance pour les femmes**. Je suis un peu mal à l'aise de discourir sur le sujet, car je n'ai pas fait le portfolio, pilier de base de la reconnaissance des acquis. Ma vraie passion, c'est l'histoire. Pour ma présentation, je me suis demandée quelles habiletés les femmes nées entre 1896 et 1920 avaient acquises au fil des ans. Comme j'ai récemment interrogé 19 mères de famille et 19 maîtresses d'école pour ma thèse de doctorat, j'ai voulu faire un lien entre la façon dont pourrait s'appliquer quelques principes de la reconnaissance des acquis et le vécu de ces femmes. À partir des expériences des mères de famille seulement, j'ai réfléchi sur les savoirs-être et les savoirs-faire qu'elles ont acquis. Et c'est le fruit de cette réflexion que je présente ici.

Laissez-moi d'abord vous expliquer rapidement comment je comprends le concept de la reconnaissance des acquis: tout au long de notre vie, on apprend plein de choses, à l'extérieur des cadres scolaires, au travail, en faisant du bénévolat ou encore en éduquant des enfants. S'en dégage ce qu'on appelle des savoirs-être et des savoirs-faire. Puis, ces connaissances-là sont des acquis qui peuvent être transférés dans divers domaines. Ainsi, une femme qui fait une collecte de fonds pour l'arène dans son village, apprend bien beaucoup. J'aimerais maintenant partager avec vous la définition de Marthe Sansregret, spécialiste de la reconnaissance des acquis, qui est venue à Saint-Boniface en mars dernier: "La reconnaissance des acquis désigne un processus par lequel une personne identifie ses apprentissages, effectués en des

temps, des lieux, selon des méthodes et des contenus variés, pour les faire évaluer par un expert et recevoir par la suite une accréditation officielle par une institution scolaire reconnue."<sup>2</sup> Dans cette présentation, je ne parlerai pas du tout d'accréditation officielle mais plutôt d'apprentissage.

## *The richness of our experience: prior learning assessment for women*

by Monique Hébert

I have come to reflect on the knowledge and capabilities that women I interviewed for my doctoral thesis (women born between the years 1986 and 1920) gained through their experience, especially those who are mothers. Women learn plenty of things all their lives-at work, while volunteering, or managing a family - and most of these skills are transferable into other areas. Assessing and identifying women's knowledge and skills can take some time: very often women underestimate what they know.

The women I interviewed learned a tremendous amount through the acts of giving birth and mothering: how to set priorities, take risks and accept consequences, find creative solutions to complex problems, identify and make use of available resources. Other skills include making (and re-making clothes, helping with school work and lessons. Many of these women also contributed to the material well-being of their families and learned skills related to business and financial management and planning, even if this meant simply "I took my money to the bank because otherwise he would drink it."

The value of unpaid work, much of which women still do for free, is rarely appraised. It is extremely important that society acknowledges the value of women's work and women's knowledge, and that we fully appreciate the contributions and expertise of women such as those in my study.

A disait  
"Sauve le  
bébé ... même  
si la mère  
meurt ... Sauve  
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j'ai dit "Ma  
soeur, ça pas  
d'bon sens."

La reconnaissance des acquis est une démarche, un processus qui prend du temps. Qu'est-ce qui est fait pendant ce temps-là? On identifie ce que l'on connaît, ce que l'on sait. Parce que trop souvent, les femmes sous-estiment ce qu'elles savent. Voulez-vous un exemple frappant de sous-estimation? Certaines femmes que j'ai interrogées allaient travailler aux magasins généraux de leur époux ou de leur père. Et l'une d'elles m'a dit en riant: "Je ne travaillais pas au magasin. J'faisais juste aider!" C'est pas peu dire!

Je ne peux pas prendre la parole à une réunion de femmes et passer sous silence les contributions de nos prédécesseurs. Alors, voici quelques-unes de mes trouvailles sur les conditions de vie des mères que j'ai interrogées dans le cadre de ma thèse de doctorat, via la reconnaissance de ce qu'elles ont pu apprendre pendant leur vie. Toutes les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis que j'utilise ici proviennent du livre de Marthe Sansregret intitulé *La reconnaissance des acquis* Pour conserver l'anonymat des informatrices, j'ai utilisé la lettre I, suivi d'un nombre, reflétant l'ordre chronologique des interviews.

**Images de maternité**

La majorité des mères interrogées ont donné naissance à leur premier enfant après un an ou moins de mariage. **Les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis:** établir des priorités, consentir à prendre des risques et accepter les conséquences de ses actions. En moyenne, les informatrices ont eu des enfants pendant 13 ans. **L'habileté de la reconnaissance des acquis:** trouver des solutions créatives aux problèmes complexes. Ces 13 années de procréation sont comparables d'ailleurs à ce qu'a noté Denyse Baillargeon en interrogeant des Québécoises qui ont vécu pendant la grande dépression de 1930.<sup>3</sup> Seulement trois de mes informatrices ont pris plus de 20 ans pour la phase de constitution de la famille, c'est-à-dire la période entre le premier et le dernier enfant. Pour elles, **L'habileté de la reconnaissance des acquis:** faire preuve de persévérance dans un projet.

Pour accoucher, les femmes que j'ai interrogées sont, en général, accompagnées par d'autres femmes. **L'habileté de la reconnaissance des acquis:** faciliter la collaboration et le soutien à l'intérieur d'un groupe. La plupart des informatrices ont accouché dans des hôpitaux. **L'habileté de la reconnaissance des acquis:** identifier les ressources matérielles utiles à la solution d'un problème.

À l'hôpital, ce n'est pas toujours joyeux! Dans la prochaine citation, vous remarquerez sans doute le caractère oral de l'entrevue dans la transcription des paroles des informatrices. Ce faisant, j'ai voulu respecter et préserver la couleur unique de leur parler.<sup>4</sup>

**3.** Denyse Baillargeon, *Ménagères au temps de la crise*, Montréal, Editions du Remue-ménage, 1991, p.110.

**4.** Pour une justification complète, voir Monique Hébert, *Les grandes gardiennes de la langue et de la fois: une histoire des Franco-Manitobaines de 1916 à 1947*, Winnipeg, thèse inédite de doctorat, Université du Manitoba, 1994, p.26-27.

*Mon accouche 'ment? Ça été très très difficile. J'ai failli perdre le bébé. Le docteur m'a attachée pour pas qu'j'meure. Le passage était trop p'tit pour laisser sortir le bébé, ça déchiré d'un boutte à l'autre. Dans c'temps-là, les Soeurs grises de l'Hôpital permettaient pas ... comment t'appl 'ça l'opération qu'enlève le bébé ... Une césarienne? Ben les Soeurs permettaient pas ça dans c'temps-là. Pis lui mon docteur, y' était anglophone, un juif; y 'allait pas à l'hôpital Saint-Boniface. Ym'a dit: "I don't go to Saint-Boniface Hospital because we run into troubles with the nuns." Fa que j'ai dit: "Well, I'm sorry but l'm a St- Boniface kid ... and with the French people and this is where l'm going." Fa qu'y' a d'mandé aux Soeurs ... mais y'a pas pu me l'enl'ver non plus. C'est pour ça qu'j'ai déchiré. A disait "Sauve le bébé ... même si la mère meurt ... Sauve le bébé!" Mais j'ai dit "Ma soeur, ça pas d'bon sens." J'ai dit "Qui c'est qui va prendre soin de c't'enfant-là?" Ah ben ... A dit - "Y'a un bon Dieu pis y va y voir." Ah ben viande à chien ... C'est vrai. A dit ça drette comme ça, Madame. (119)*

Pour elle, **les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis:** expliquer ses besoins, ses volontés, ses opinions et ses préférences ainsi qu'identifier et communiquer ses valeurs avec efficacité.

Ce que les informatrices ont appris pendant leur enfance, elles le reproduisent généralement dans leur famille.

En moyenne, les mères que j'ai interrogées ont eu sept enfants et se sont fait aider durant leurs relevailles par d'autres femmes. Plus de sept mères de famille ont eu des domestiques, qu'elles nomment "des servantes". **Les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis:** travail d'équipe et gérer des ressources humaines. De plus, onze des dix-neuf mères de famille ont reçu un coup de main de leur mère, de leur belle-mère, de leur soeur ou de leur belle-soeur pour se remettre de leurs accouchements. **Les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis:** utiliser des arguments pour convaincre les autres, travailler sous pression et déléguer des responsabilités pour l'accomplissement d'une tâche. Quand les mères ont recours à de l'aide extérieure, elles choisissent des jeunes filles de langue française:

*J'engageais une fille après mes accouchements. Dans c'temps-là, on payait 10 piastres par mois. J'avais une fille pour un mois à peu près. Quand j'étais à l'hôpital, pis un p'tit peu après. C'est toute l'aide que j'avais besoin. J'ai toujours eu des accouchements assez faciles. Vous savez, j'sortais d'l'hôpital, j'étais comme neuf...(Rires). J'tais prête à r'commencer (Rires). Les filles qui v'naient, c' tait des Canadiennes françaises, mes enfants parlaient pas anglais... Fallait quelqu'un les comprenne. (15)*

Pour elle, **L'habileté de la reconnaissance des acquis:** se respecter soi-même, sa langue et sa culture. Et ce, en milieu minoritaire, ce n'est pas toujours évident comme vous le savez.

### Et quoi d'autre?

Les femmes ne contribuent pas seulement aux relations humaines, mais aussi au bien-être matériel de leur famille. Par exemple, deux informatrices faisaient de la couture pour les autres femmes de leur milieu afin de gagner de l'argent. Une autre avait pris contrôle de l'argent qu'elle gagnait: "C'est moé qu'ya eu l'idée d'ach'ter les 300 poules pour gagner de l'argent. J'apportais pas mon argent à maison. J'allais l'porter à banque parc'que lui y buvait." (L'informatrice 17) Même si elles ne sont pas rémunérées, les Franco-Manitobaines apportent une grande contribution sur le plan financier.

Ce que les informatrices ont appris pendant leur enfance, elles le reproduisent généralement dans leur famille.<sup>5</sup> Des milliers de gestes répétés inlassablement, comme leur mère et leur belle-mère avant elles, composaient leur quotidien. Comme le dit si-bien l'une d'elles: "Toué jours, c'tait la même affaire: le ménage à faire, les enfants à avoir soin, les repas à faire. Ça prenait ben du temps ça" (I 3). **Les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis:** suivre un plan d'action pour atteindre des objectifs ainsi qu'établir un horaire et le respecter. Voici un autre exemple:

*Oui, si on était organisé!!! On commençait nos journées d'bonne heure. Ah oui, j 'mettais chauffer mon eau l'dimanche soir. Ça fait qu'à 4 h 30 - 5 h, j'étais en train de laver. Laver mon linge. Par 7 h 30, quand mes enfants s'levaient, j'avais tout fini. P't'êtr'ben qu'y fallait qu'j'étende mon linge dehors, mais tout était lavé. Si j'tais organisée !!! (I 14)*

5. Voir à ce sujet, Monique Hébert, D'une génération à l'autre, la transmission du rôle maternelle au Manitoba français, 1916-1947, Ottawa, Publications de l'ICREF, à paraître automne 1995.

6. Susan Strasser, Never done, A History of American Housework, New York, Pantheon, 1982, p.32.

Pour elle, **les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis:** analyser les tâches et établir des priorités ainsi que gérer son temps efficacement.

La reproduction de la vie matérielle, faire la cuisine par exemple, est ardue, puisqu'il fallait, à l'époque transformer toutes les denrées de base.<sup>6</sup> Et l'une des tâches de cuisine qui revient d'année en année est celle reliée aux battages: certaines informatrices ont abondamment parlé de la tâche de nourrir les batteurs.

*Ah, les battages ... c'tait toute une ... une saison ça. Fallait s'préparer d'avance ... pis d'un coup ... "Quand est-cé qui vont v'nir? Ben y vont p't'êtr' v'nir vendredi." Wouin, n'importe quel jour, toujours ben fallait s'préparer. Pis y 'avait une vingtaine d'hommes. Une grande table comme ça, pis y 'arrivait un lot d'hommes. Fallait s'dépêcher. Pis après ça, dans 'près-midi, fallait aller leu porter un lunch, dans un plat à pain comme ça,*

*pis c'tait plein d'sandwichs, là. Pis là, c'tait l'fun là. (Rires) Les hommes étaient toutes assis à terre dans l'champ à côté d'la machine-là pis c'tait l'fun, les battages ... (Rires) Ah ben oui, entendu qu'y restaient pas trop longtemps. (Rires). (19)*

"Les affaires d'l'école? C'est une affaire de femmes. Tout ce qui a à faire avec les enfants, c'est une affaire de femmes. "

**Les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis:** appliquer des principes organisationnels, faire de la planification stratégique et administrer un budget. Puisque la présence des batteurs alourdit la tâche des femmes, il n'est pas surprenant que certaines n'appréciaient pas ce moment de l'année.

*Ah, les battages, c'tait pas drôle. Moé, j'aimais pas ça. J'tais avec mes p'tits ... fallait acheter toutes sortes de choses. Fallait engager. Dans c'temps-là, on avait pas nos affaires à nuzôtes. Fallait engager des étrangers. Pis on sait pas comment c'tait ... Ah ça, je détestais les battages ... La plupart du temps, y couchaient dans l'étable pis dans l'grinier. Ah, si ça faisait du manger. Moé,*

*j'haïssais ça. Pis fallait faire du bon manger. T'en avais, on app'lait ça des gueules fines. Tsé, c'tait habitué à manger des 'tits çi, des 'tits ça. J'haïssais ça, moé. (110)*

### Du côté des enfants

La responsabilité première des femmes était celle des enfants. Dans le quotidien, elles s'occupaient, entre autres, de l'alimentation et des prières. Voici quelques exemples en ce qui a trait aux vêtements et aux devoirs des enfants. Pour toutes ces activités, **L'habileté de la reconnaissance des acquis:** enseigner une habileté, un concept, des principes.

Commençons par les vêtements. Dix-sept mères font les vêtements de leurs enfants. L'une d'elles, par exemple, faisait ses propres vêtements et ceux des enfants avec des vêtements usagés, comme de vieux manteaux. Son mari allait à la ville voisine pour acheter les siens. Quand les femmes faisaient-elles cette tâche? "On travaillait la nuit pour avoir plus de liberté, jusqu'à minuit, une heure des fois. J'avais un vieux moulin à pédale Singer." (I 4) Quant l'informatrice I 9, elle cousait aussi à partir de vieux vêtements: "On avait du vieux linge pour faire du neuf avec ... du linge qui faisait pu à un, on l'baissait à l'autre. En faisant des p'tites améliorations, ben sûr." L'informatrice I 6 cousait tellement qu'un bon dimanche, en farce, son enfant dit à ses grand- parents maternels: "Y'a rien qu'les bottines qu'môman a l'a pas faites." L'informatrice I16 faisait des vêtements par plaisir, comme loisir: J'faisais les chemises de mes garçons et tout. J'faisais plutôt ça pour m'amuser. Toutes les petites chemises, les couches, c'est toute moi qui avait fait ça. Pis les p'tites couvertes aussi. Ainsi, la couture occupe amplement les femmes. **Les habiletés de la reconnaissance des acquis:** habiletés de mathématique, de conceptualisation d'un ouvrage et de créativité ainsi que d'appliquer différentes méthodes pour arriver à un produit fini adéquat et acceptable, selon des critères préétablis.

Voyons maintenant de plus près un des aspects de l'éducation des enfants: les devoirs et les leçons. Car voyez-vous, "Les affaires d'école? C'est une affaire de femmes. Tout ce qui a à faire avec les enfants, c'est une affaire de femmes." (I 1) Les informatrices se sont acquittées de ce devoir dans la mesure de leurs capacités: "On charchait dans les encyclopédies pis toute ça, ensemble. Pour les faire lire, j'tais bonne, épeler ou queque chose, mais quand ça l'arrivait à l'arithmétique', fallait qu'y s'arrangent eux-autr'mêmes." (15) **L'habileté de la reconnaissance des acquis:** identifier les ressources matérielles utiles à la solution d'un problème.

Quel que soit le niveau d'instruction formelle des femmes, l'apprentissage scolaire à la maison reste leur domaine. Il va sans dire que la tâche est proportionnelle au nombre d'enfants. L'informatrice I 12, qui en avait quatorze, devait faire preuve d'une grande organisation: "Y'en avait beaucoup à faire. J'commençais par les plus p'tits puis après, c'tait les plus grands. J'avais pas l'choix. Fallait ben qu'j'aide les enfants. Lui, y l'faisait jamais."

Et des loisirs? Les femmes interviewées n'en on pas, pas plus que les Québécoises de la même époque, d'ailleurs.<sup>7</sup> Certaines d'entre elles ont fait preuve de finesse politique car prendre part à des réunions publiques pendant leur temps libre demeurait toutefois exceptionnel. En effet, les femmes n'y semblent pas admises, comme le dit l'une d'elles:

*On en avait des assemblées d'école, des assemblées d'commissaires. On y allait pas (les femmes), mais ça nous intéressait quand même. Les femmes y... y s'en mêlaient à maison... mais y' avaient pas le droit d'vote à ces places-là. Ah ben, j'le sais pas mais y s'en mêlaient pareil. (Rires) (19)*

**L'habileté de la reconnaissance des acquis:** utiliser des formules et des styles de communication variés pour convaincre.

## Conclusion

En terminant, disons que leurs gestes peuvent se résumer à peu de choses mais combien importantes. De la reproduction biologique comme telle en passant par les accouchements et les relevailles, j'ai essayé de voir quelles habiletés les informatrices avaient acquises par leur travail à la maison. Il me faudrait beaucoup de temps pour dévoiler l'ensemble de leurs contributions à la survie de la communauté franco-manitobaine.

Alors, j'espère avoir rapidement démontré comment la méthode de la reconnaissance des acquis permet d'utiliser les expériences des femmes pour faire ressortir les habiletés acquises à la maison mais qui auraient pu mener au marché du travail. En fait, comme le travail non salarié est rarement valorisé, la méthode de la reconnaissance des acquis permet de donner une valeur à ce que les femmes font encore gratuitement, malheureusement. Il importe d'accepter d'emblée ce principe pour revaloriser l'apport des femmes dans la société. Objectiviser, voilà la clef derrière la démarche de la reconnaissance des acquis. Toujours garder en tête la question suivante; qu'est-ce que j'ai appris en faisant cette; expérience, ce voyage, ce travail ou ce bénévolat? Je vous laisse donc avec la dite question: qu'est-ce que vous apprenez en participant à une assemblée générale annuelle?

*7. Denise Lemieux et Lucie Mercier, Les femmes au tournant du siècle, Montréal, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture (iqrc), 1989, p. 320.*

*Monique Hébert occupe le poste de coordonnatrice du Comité de coordination régional pour contrer la violence faite aux femmes de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton. À l'automne 1995, elle recevait le prix Réseau, accordé chaque année à une femme d'action au Manitoba français. La réalité des femmes francophones, elle la connaît bien et tente de la défendre et de l'améliorer.*

## POETRY

### **Domestic Angel**

Wedge between stove and deep  
freeze, I dream domestic,  
tend herbs and poetry, snip  
sage and Sexton, pick  
parsley and Plath. I draw  
lists as long as spaghetti, cook  
soups and poems from scratch  
of cabbage and snatched lines. I slice  
onions into pale halos, moon rings  
as round as cherubim's mouths singing, singing,  
singing slick commercial jingles. They feed  
me lines as I feed one man's  
needs, his growing appetite.

I set the table for a feast,  
light candles for this  
ritual. The small gold flames leap  
from matchstick to wick, a blushing  
wine heats the space within us.

Words melt on my tongue  
like the memory of something  
familiar, vanilla or mace, the lingering  
tastes. I forget the price of  
bliss is silence.

**Sylvie Bourassa**

Montreal, Quebec

## "You learned how to read and write. What else do you want?"



CLOW investigates, supports, and promotes what else women want from their education, including the right to learn to read and write.

### **in literacy**

- CLOW has published the results of a three year research study on women and literacy programs: *The power of woman-positive literacy work*, *Women in literacy speak*, and *Listen to women in literacy*.
- CLOW collaborated with sister organizations to produce a document on education and literacy for the 1995 UN World Conference on Women.
- in 1996, CLOW will produce a resource book entitled *Making Connections: literacy and ESL materials from a feminist perspective*, a collaborative effort from fifteen diverse women from across Canada.

### **in educational equity**

- CLOW continues ground-breaking work in the area of violence and its effect on learning and education. In 1995 we produced *Isolating the Barriers and Strategies for Prevention: a kit about violence and women's education for adult learners and adult educators* and *Making Change: Raising awareness about violence as a barrier to women's education*.
- every year CLOW awards twelve \$500 scholarships to women across Canada upgrading their high school education. Funds are raised in our annual celebrity book auction.
- CLOW networks in the provinces and territories support women's pursuit of education. CLOW-B.C. produced *The Back-to-School Survival Guide*, CLOW-Manitoba distributed *The Woman's Guide to University Resources*, CLOW-Yukon annually awards the Julie Cruikshank Bursary to a woman returning to learning.

### **coalition partnerships**

- CLOW is collaborating with nine other women's groups to develop

models of collective fund-raising and has published a comprehensive report entitled Sharing Resources.

- CCLOW sent two representatives to the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, and will follow up with information and analyses on the outcomes of the conference.

**AND...** CCLOW publishes **Women's Education des femmes**, an alternative, informative, insightful and provocative magazine about women's learning and education.

**Are YOU a member?** (see inside back cover for membership information)

**CCLOW: A national voice for women's education and training in Canada**



<sup>1</sup> "Education Behind the Veil: Women in Afghanistan,"  
by Sharifa Sharif, WEdf, vol.11, no.2, pp.4-9.

## National Training Reform in Australia: The Challenge for Women

by **Kaye Schofield**

The new systemic objectives, under the Training Reform Agenda, are far less women friendly.

**I**n Australia we have gone through four waves of thinking about our objectives for women in vocational education and training. Over the last two decades considerable progress has been made possible by our collective actions, achievements which are the practical result of feminists strongly and actively pressuring the system and responding to the demands and entitlements of women in the community. From an appreciation of our success, we can gather strength for the new battles which always await us.

Women's engagement with the issue of training began in the mid to late 1970s, when vocational education and training was a giant

black hole for most of us. We knew that the "tech" was the place our brothers went one day a week for three years, that they needed slide rules and technical drawing instruments, and that they did not like going there. There was little or no feminist analysis of if, how or why this part of the education system should be, in its own right, a site of feminist struggle. This did not mean that there were no struggles. These derived directly from the objectives of the 1972 agenda for child care and for removing barriers to education and thus to employment and equal pay.<sup>1</sup>

By the start of the eighties, the systemic objectives of unrestricted access for individuals created synergies with more clearly articulated feminist objectives. This marked the onset of the second wave, the movement beyond access. These included breaking down the sexual division of labour and improving women's employment prospects, economic position and working experience, through institutional training. The focus on women in non-traditional occupations strengthened and the links between women in vocational education and feminists concerned with the position of women in the labour market were forged.

It was in the early to mid-eighties that we saw the rise of feminists in the bureaucracy of the State Departments of Technical and Further Education (TAFE)<sup>2</sup> who, with great skill and support from feminists in the community, exerted pressure from within. New positions and structures, such as Equal Opportunity Officers and the National Working Party of Women's Advisers, put enormous pressure on the policy arms of the state and federal bureaucracies and helped with a clearer articulation of objectives for action within TAFE.

## *Réforme nationale de la formation en Australie : le défi des femmes*

par Kaye Schofield

En Australie, nous avons passé par quatre courants de pensée en ce qui concerne l'enseignement professionnel et la formation des femmes, des premières demandes dans les années 70 pour que des garderies soient créées et les obstacles éliminés à notre lutte actuelle à propos de la Réforme nationale de la formation, qui prit forme dans les années 80. Les objectifs précédents, soit un accès à la formation sans restrictions et équitable, ont cédé le pas à d'autres objectifs, qui relèvent de l'optique élargie de l'industrie. On met davantage l'accent sur les valeurs extrinsèques de la formation (plus grande souplesse économique et innovation technologique, par exemple) que sur les valeurs intrinsèques de la femme, seule ou en groupe.

En raison de l'envergure et de la complexité des réformes nationales de la formation, l'énergie des féministes a été mise à rude épreuve et des fossés se sont creusés entre les femmes et entre les femmes et l'État. Il est urgent que nous créions une solide coalition de femmes dans l'industrie privée et publique, dans le secteur de la formation professionnelle, parmi les femmes marginalisées et chez les femmes universitaires. Nous devons nous concentrer sur la prestation des cours de formation à l'échelle locale,

sur la création de réseaux nationaux et de nouvelles possibilités de s'instruire. Au lieu d'essayer de déterminer si les femmes tirent parti ou non de la concurrence existant entre les fournisseurs, nous devons réfléchir à la structure, au comportement et à la performance du marché de la formation et déterminer où il faut intervenir afin de mettre en place un système équitable pour les femmes. Le défi qui se pose à nous-faire ce que nous faisons le mieux, à savoir prendre immédiatement des mesures.

### **National Training Reform Agenda**

A third wave of thinking, reflecting the need to change the whole system rather than sponsor equity bubbles within it, gathered force throughout the 1980s. But around 1988, the ground on which we were working began to shift beneath us, signaling the fourth wave of thinking. The National Training Reform Agenda emerged, shaped by an alliance between the federal government and the trade union movement in response to the economic challenges facing Australia and the need to develop a more open and globally competitive economy.<sup>3</sup>

We do not yet have a coherent feminist response to matters of the training market, competition, and the role of government.

The earlier systemic objective of unrestricted access and equity for all individuals had created fertile ground for feminists to promote access and equity for women and for other excluded groups. By the late 1980s, access and equity were criticized, principally by industry, as making TAFE "all things to all people." The new systemic objectives, under the Training Reform Agenda, were far less women friendly. They were initially driven from a relatively narrow industry perspective, particularly from apprenticeship and manufacturing. The extrinsic values of training, such as contribution to greater economic flexibility and technological innovation, were more strongly emphasized than the intrinsic value to women individually or as a group.

Up to 1989, most of the drive to advance the interests of women in vocational education and training had come from women in education in the public sector. These women were supported by women in labour bureaucracies and trade unions who were concerned with the gender segregation of the labour market and its consequential effects on women's wages and working conditions. TAFE had been the site of principal struggle.

But in 1989 this shifted. The focus was now on the whole of the vocational education and training system comprising not just TAFE but also, and equally importantly, in-industry training and private and community-based training. Women in the labour movement and in labour bureaucracies, anxious to seize the new industrial relations agenda and its training implications and turn it to serve the interests of women, began to take the initiative. But while the objectives of the training reforms were moderately clear from a national economic perspective, and quite clear from an industrial relations perspective, they were not and are still not clear from a feminist perspective.

### **Relations with the state**

The National Training Reform Agenda has been constructed and is driven by a coalition of government and trade union interests. Increasingly, women are calling into question their historically close relations with the state. Australian feminism has long had a reliance on state intervention to achieve its objectives. As Lyndall Ryan has put it: "In Australia the state has not only been considered neutral, but as the initiator of change. While it is undoubtedly a patriarchal structure, its potential to liberate women from dependence on husbands and fathers is enormous. There is no doubt that the rise of the New Right in Australia has to a large degree been a response to the success femocrats have achieved in initiating major policy changes in the delivery of services to women. This pioneering decade (from 1973 to 1983) enabled femocrats to understand the possibilities as well as the limitations of change."<sup>4</sup>

As long as the state was committed to unrestricted access of women to vocational education through TAFE and equity for them within TAFE, it was possible to believe that it could be turned to feminist ends. In 1988 and 1989, the decision to adopt the National Training Reform Agenda and refocus effort away from the needs of individuals to the needs of the economy, industries, enterprises, and global competition, caught feminists in a difficult web.

On the one hand, many aspects of the reforms could serve the interests of women. The commitment by labour and union feminists to nation-wide restructuring of rigid male-based industrial awards, to broadening the range of competencies that workers could be required to perform, to the establishment of skill-related career paths linking training, skills and wages and to progressive reform of workplace practices were (and still are) supported by feminists in vocational education. We shared a view that these changes would lead to more satisfying and skilled jobs for women as well as men, to greater employee participation in decision-making in the workplace, and that training had a vital role to play in achieving these objectives.

As well, the reforms still had an access and equity objective that could play a key role. The national recognition of training objectives provided an opportunity" for the skills acquired by women in workplaces to be publicly recognized and nationally portable. Recognition of prior learning was seen as a major step forward in obtaining formal recognition of the skills informally acquired by women. Even the objective of competency standards provided an opportunity to deal productively with the gendered definition of skill which had for so long restricted women's earning power.

On the other hand, the crunch has now come as the initially clumsy efforts to construct an open and competitive training market make way for a far more sophisticated version. There is a broad policy push towards applying microeconomic reform principles generally and public sector reform specifically to shape the vocational education and training system in both the public and private sectors. Such developments are part of the overall thrust of government at all levels in Australia to reduce the state's influence over the economy in favor of market forces, to scale back the public sector, and to make business



national training reforms and even of other feminists in the labour movement to acknowledge or accept that public provision for women not in the paid workforce is of equal economic and social importance as that for women in the paid workforce. Tensions between feminists in TAFE and those in the union movement in particular exist, and while there is much cooperation at many levels, the systematic criticism of the public sector by the union movement or vice versa does little to either identify or resolve the tensions or the problems which confront us collectively.

The national training reforms offer little benefit to Aboriginal women, particularly those in remote communities, many of whom are still excluded from the paid workforce. Because their contribution to structural adjustment is regarded as non-existent, their needs are considered peripheral to the main game. The reforms offer only marginally more for women from non-English speaking backgrounds, principally if they are employed in the manufacturing sector and achieve derived benefits from enterprise bargaining and other workplace reforms in that sector. For women with disabilities, the national reforms per se are virtually irrelevant. An industry or market driven vocational education and training system offers little to these women. With a focus on the extrinsic value of vocational education and training—that is, the extent to which it produces more flexible and adaptable workers—attention to the intrinsic value of general vocational education has been minimal in the glamour of the debate about microeconomic reform and global competitiveness. The gap then widens between what Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and women from non-English speaking backgrounds want and have a right to demand from the vocational education and training system, and those women concerned with the general training needs of women with greater access to paid work.

The once close alliances between feminists in the schooling sector and women in the TAFE and training sector, represented through the Australian Women's Education Coalition, appear to have drifted away as vocational education and training has become more focused on the interface between education and the labour market. The interactions between feminists practically involved in training matters and those in the academy, with some notable exceptions, have also diminished, perhaps as Women's Studies as a field of knowledge has strengthened and different schools of feminist theory have emerged more clearly. I believe that the gap between the theory and the practice of feminism in vocational education and training has never been greater. For many of us, post-modernism is more obscure and inaccessible than post-Fordism.

There is a continuing need for fundamental research around feminist issues, and I do not expect the language of such research or theoretical discourse to be always easy or the concepts quickly grasped and applied by women delivering services or developing public policy. But much of the strength of the feminist movement has derived from the coincidence of feminist theory and political struggle, and one informing and nurturing the other. This link appears to be weakening, and vocational education and training and the feminist academy are both the worse for it.

## **Defining Our Own Agenda**

The women's agenda for TAFE which had emerged with some coherence by the mid 1980s included child care, special programs for women seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce, targeting women's access to non-traditional occupations, redistribution of resources to traditional areas of women's training, structured entry-level training arrangements to cover women's traditional occupations, and more women in decision-making positions.

A new political force, perhaps a national coalition of women in vocational education and training, is needed.

Launched in October 1992, the National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE was endorsed by all Australian governments. It had six agenda items: improve paths of entry for all women into accredited TAFE courses; improve women's successful participation in vocational training; improve the TAFE learning and physical environment for women; improve support services for women; ensure that women benefit equally from training for industry and award restructuring; increase the participation of women in TAFE decision-making. An evaluation of the outcomes from this Plan has recently been completed and a new national strategy for women in vocational education and training is being developed.

Despite these achievements, I believe that the agenda has run out of momentum. Not because it has been achieved, nor because it has become institutionalized (although there is some element of this) or ossified. But because it focused on public provision by TAFE and has been overtaken, if not overwhelmed, by the sheer brute force of the advocates of the National Training Reform Agenda. What then is an appropriate feminist agenda for vocational education and training? I suggest that there needs to be an agenda which is a mix of content and process objectives. My personal thoughts go as follows.

### **Build New Feminist Alliances:**

First we need to build new alliances between women concerned with industrial training and women concerned with vocational education. These alliances should lie outside institutional forums. Second, we need to build alliances between women working in industry training in the private sector and women in the public sector. Third, and probably most importantly, we need to build alliances between these women and women working in the community, particularly Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and women of non-English speaking backgrounds. Finally, these alliances need to be informed by and connected with feminists working in the academy. A new political force, perhaps a national coalition of women in vocational education and training, is needed to ensure that there is a strong base from which to influence public policy and practice. Without a solid coalition of interests, women in each of these sectors will be picked off one by one, pitted against each other, and the possibility of real and sustained change will be lost.

### **Focus on local delivery and national networks:**

From an access and equity perspective and from a market perspective, the actual delivery of training to women is equally important. By focusing feminist effort on delivery we are not abandoning our purchase on the policy agenda; rather we are building the base from

which the policy agenda can be reshaped in the interests of women.

But the danger of complete localism is the lack of opportunity for women in vocational education and training to learn from each other. Thus a renewed focus on delivery must be supported through a national network. Given the penchant for, and dare I say, success of "best practice" approaches, a best practice strategy for women in vocational education and training has some potential.

### **Capture new learning technologies:**

A much neglected dimension of the debate around women's position in vocational education and training is the area of new learning technologies. New technologies are essential to the question of flexible delivery and the development of new educational opportunities for those not able to readily take up traditional places in training institutions. New technologies, including interactive video conferencing, also have the capability of linking women in workplace training with those in institutional education. The power of open learning lies not in the tools-the technology itself-but in its flexibility and thus the power it places in the hands of learners. As research by Williams and Burns indicated, "Women students were not daunted by the need to use communication technologies and computers in flexible delivery. While they expressed some initial lack of confidence, any concerns expressed were related to the limited access and technical services available to support students' use." <sup>6</sup>

Those of us responsible for the supply of vocational education and training need to do a much better job of getting to the heart of what women actually want.

But to ensure the technology is used in appropriate ways relevant to the needs of women, it must be guided by women. Priorities for the development and application of new technologies including the so-called information highway, must be set with the interests of women in the forefront.

### **Define the rules of the training market:**

The directions being taken by Australian governments do not actually support a completely deregulated market in this or any other area of public sector reform, despite the accompanying rhetoric. Wyn Grant has described approaches to marketisation of the economy as partisan state-led adjustment: "Unlike company led adjustments where the task of change is left in the hands of companies operating in an approximation of a market economy, partisan state-led adjustments involve interventions by government in order to create the conditions in which, ultimately, such company-led adjustment can occur. ... Conditions must be created in which free enterprise can flourish, but business cannot do this by itself, partly because of what is seen as spinelessness, partly because the obstacles are so great that they can only be tackled through the determined use of state power."<sup>7</sup>

Instead of focusing on whether competition amongst providers of training is good or bad for women, we should think more broadly about the structure, conduct and performance

of the training market and about where government intervention to ensure equity for women is required and most readily justified. We should focus on the rules which are set for the conduct of the market, on providing information to women about the market, on the fees and charges which impact on women, and on ensuring that equity initiatives are retained within the public sector and that equitable outcomes are required of the market operators.

### **Taking Action**

Women need access to high quality and affordable vocational education and training, conducted from feminist perspectives, to expand their own learning, to improve their position in the labour market, and to increase their influence over social and community life. Those of us responsible for the supply of vocational education and training need to do a much better job of getting to the heart of what women actually want from vocational education and training, rather than focusing on what we believe we should provide for them.

Local action to assess what it is that women require from the system and how they see their needs being best met should be informed by a feminist analysis and supported by a strong coalition of women concerned with these issues. More focus on national reports and top-down centralism will not produce real results for women. Our challenge is to do what we do best: take action and do it now.

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1. 1972 was a defining year of change for women in Australia. In December the conservative Liberal federal government, in power since 1949, was defeated by the federal Labour Party committed to equity and social justice and to fundamental social and community reforms. The new government was influenced by and in turn supported feminist demands. For example, in health and community services, the principal policy goals were legal and cheap abortion, rape crises centers, women's shelters and increased expenditures on child care. In education and training the agenda included access to child care, re-entry programs for mature aged women, Aboriginal women and women from non-English speaking backgrounds, elimination of sexism in curriculum materials and teaching practices, increased participation of women in traditionally male areas of training, equal employment opportunity and the appointment of women to special positions within government to support and achieve change.
2. In Australia, TAFE colleges are the publicly funded training providers, managed and largely funded by state government departments.
3. The eight items on the Agenda are: Competency Based Training; Competency Standards; National Recognition of Training; Curriculum Delivery and

Assessment; Entry Level Training; Open Training Market; Access and Equity; and Funding for Training.

4. Lyndall Ryan, "Feminism and the Federal Bureaucracy, 1972-1983" in Sophie Watson, ed., *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions*. Verso: London, 1990, p.83.
5. Stephen Bell & Brian Head, "Australia's Political Economy: Critical themes and issues" in Stephen Bell & Brian Head, eds., *State, Economy and Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.
6. Helinka Williams & Wendy Burns, *Flexible Training Strategies for Women: A Report on Research Undertaken in 1993*. A national project funded by the National Plan of Action for Women and TAFE. Open Learning Unit, South Australian Department of Employment, Training and Further Education, Adelaide, 1994, p.iii.
7. Wyn Grant (with J. Sargent), *Business and Politics in Britain*. Macmillan, London, 1987, p.246, quoted in Stephen Bell & Brian Head, "Australia's Political Economy," p.21.

## CLOW COLUMN

### **The Video Project: CLOW /Ivan Landers Production**

CLOW is working with Ivan Landers Production to explore the possibility of producing a video on the effects of violence on women's education. Riva Lieflander (née Love), past member of CLOW's Board of Directors, has been integral in initiating this important project, the aim of which is to produce a sensitive and provocative video resource that addresses the impact of violence on women's learning and education. The tentative release date is 1997.

Le Réseau d'action éducation femmes has participated in recent meetings on this project, and is currently considering becoming a collaborative partner in order to produce a video relevant to the experiences of francophone women.

# Learning to Tell my own Stories

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by Pamela Simmons

*If they could speak an unconditioned language what would they say?*

Daphne Marlatt, Ana Historic

On June 7, 1995, in the one hundred and seventeenth year of the University of Western Ontario, I sat in anticipation of my future as I waited to be convocated. As the air conditioning began to take affect on my body, my mind wandered. I looked towards my future in freelance writing and contemplated how I came to choose this particular goal.

As a woman, I am concerned with the quality of education I received from the traditionally male dominated world of the university.

Watching students A through R receive their degrees I noticed just how many were women. Not long ago the entire group would have been male, professors and students. On this day, only one of a week long convocation, over 136 women received their degrees in the Honours Bachelor of Arts program alone. As a woman, these growing numbers are of interest to me but, as a woman writer, I am more concerned with the quality of education I received from the traditionally male dominated and male oriented world of the university.

At the start of my Arts degree I was permitted only to take one English course, and that was fine because I was more interested in anthropology and archaeology. The course I took was a survey entitled Forms of Fiction. Two of the very few women writers on the syllabus were Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf. *Pride and Prejudice* by Austen was likened to a soap opera by my professor and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* was described as a tedious and terrible read. I disagreed, but most of the class did not. Introducing a class to women's writing in the manner that my professor did likely turned many students, male and female, away from the subject. The very fact that these two novels were different than the other writing in the course attracted me, creating an interest that lasts today.

The Honours English program at Western, in which I decided to enroll, allows its students to take almost any of the required courses at any time during the four years of the program. With the number of courses to choose from, a student could still end up with a very traditional education steeped in canonical principles. But it is no longer impossible for a student in this program to gain a more diverse and representational knowledge of the literary world. With the growing number of women professors on staff, women students have the opportunity to choose a course of study which best serves their needs and

interests. In a time when a university degree is a growing requirement for success in any career, high quality education is an asset to success and survival for all people. As a writer, the ability to get the most out of my university years was and still is very important.

## *Apprendre à raconter mes propres histoires*

par Pamela Simmons

Récemment diplômée de l'université et écrivain en herbe, je m'inquiète de la qualité de l'éducation que d'autres femmes et moi-même recevons dans un monde universitaire traditionnellement dominé par les hommes. Compte tenu des changements constants du programme d'anglais, j'estime qu'il n'est plus impossible pour un élève inscrit à un programme d'études avec spécialisation en anglais de se doter de connaissances plus diversifiées et plus représentatives de la littérature. Grâce au nombre plus élevé de professeurs, les étudiantes ont la possibilité de choisir des cours qui répondent à leurs propres besoins et intérêts. En étudiant des oeuvres d'auteurs marginaux, dont celles de femmes ou d'écrivains autochtones, je me suis rendu compte que, nous, les femmes écrivains, devons établir notre identité propre et remplacer les vieilles idées imposées par des idées nouvelles.

L'envie de nous faire entendre ne date pas d'aujourd'hui. Certes, je quitte la salle de classe, mais quand j'essaierai d'atteindre les objectifs que je me suis fixés, je n'oublierai pas que lorsque j'écris c'est non seulement moi qui m'exprime, mais aussi toutes les femmes qui m'ont précédée, leurs voix et leurs rêves.

Pride and Prejudice was likened to a soap opera by my professor and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* described as a tedious and terrible read.

From first to second year was a huge shift. First year was overly general and course material was limited to the literary standards. The class was large in number and the breakdown was almost 50:50 men to women. Second year classes were smaller, but most significant was the dramatic drop in the number of male students. The majority of students in English courses are women yet the majority of professors are men. Can a male professor effectively capture and maintain the interest of a class full of women?

If the job is done well, a professor creates an atmosphere for discussion, contemplation and learning through the medium of literature. One way to approach this task is to change the way literature is presented. In Women's Studies programs, "students stress the wonderful encouragement they receive from their female professors and greater understanding they experience with their peers."<sup>1</sup> Can this sense of validation be created in other areas of study? I believe it can and has begun to show up in areas of the English program at Western.

In the Medieval Literature course I took in my third year my professor made an effort to point out strong female characters to the class, which countered those created in a more misogynist vein. While studying Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Dr. Watson stressed to us the importance of seeing ambiguity in the poem, opening it to many possible readings. I felt my ideas were treated with respect and that if I could make a strong argument with adequate evidence to support my thesis, I would not be told I was wrong. Dr. Watson also gave us examples of women's writing from the period, and after teaching this course went on to teach a special topics course on medieval women's writing.

In that same academic year I completed two courses taught by a professor who was cross-appointed to both the English and the Women's Studies department. After these courses my frame of mind was never quite the same. Dr. Kathleen Fraser presented literature in a way I had not yet experienced. Half of the required reading in Canadian Drama was written by women playwrights and a portion of the course was spent discussing Native theatre. Not only did I read some excellent plays, but I was introduced to areas of theatre I would not otherwise have known.

Following Canadian Drama I chose to take an new special topics course introduced to the English department by Dr. Fraser and entitled "Native Literature." Some students were Native but most were not. By the end of the course I realized that the importance of studying the literature of marginalized groups, such as women and Native people, is that they often use literature and theatre "as a tool to push ideas forward."<sup>2</sup> To these previously unrepresented groups words are like medicine to age-old wounds; we need to construct our own identities and replace the old imposed ideas with new ones. So I, as a writer, "have to find my own colors and mix my own paint."<sup>3</sup> Changes like the ones I have described in the English program have allowed me to push my own ideas forward.

In my last year, I came to realize and appreciate many things. Before my third year my future career plans were by no means clear. As a kid I had always loved to write but until fourth year I assumed I would have to stand in line for teacher's college with other women who had graduated with Honors English degrees. Not until I discovered the numbers of women who did write-plays, poetry, short fiction and novels-did I feel as though wanting to write was a legitimate desire and a possible career. As third year came to an end I was beginning to lean in that direction and fourth year confirmed the plan.

Pamela Westoby



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I really enjoyed my last year, not only because it marked the end of a long term goal but because I took courses that I found very relevant to my interests. Two courses in particular influenced me a great deal: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature, and Twentieth-Century British Literature. Eighteenth-Century British Literature, taught by Dr. Allison Conway, had an incredible effect on me. In her first year as a professor, Dr. Conway contributed more than just her own knowledge and experience. She conveyed a real love for the material and her enthusiasm was contagious. We had a very full reading list but anything less would not have been enough.

Not until this class experience, for which I had to wait until my fourth year, did I realize how many women writers there were over a hundred years ago. The desire to have our voices heard is not young. What I also had not expected is that the issues these women confront are not far from those faced by women writers today. As I witnessed a tradition of women's writing unfold before my eyes I saw that I wanted to be a part of that tradition and that I could be part of it.

Not until I discovered the numbers of women who did write, did I feel as though wanting to write was a legitimate desire and a possible career.

A part of any budding freelance writer's career is checking out the competition. An interesting portion of my groundwork began in my Twentieth-Century British Literature course with Dr. Patrick Deanne. In this course we discussed works spanning from before World War I to the present. The contemporary works were particularly interesting because few other courses looked at writing that is not published in large anthologies. And while there are more anthologies available which cover a wider range, it remains necessary to go outside these sources for a comprehensive look at contemporary literature. Professor Deane added books to the course including *The New Poetry* published by Bloodaxe Books, Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* published by Vintage, and *The Penguin Book of Modern British Short Stories*.

Stepping away from the standard forum of literature was refreshing and enlightening. I saw how more women today write poetry or short fiction than long novels. I saw how the issues women writers confront encompass even established literary genres and how important this is in developing one's own literary style. After studying the works of these contemporary writers, I feel I am not alone in my thoughts or in the ways I would like to express them. A door of possibilities has been opened.

I leave the classroom behind now, but as I work towards my future goals I will remember what I learned in my university years: that there is no standard way, that I am not alone in my desire to write, and that when I write I speak with my own voice but I take with me the voices of women who came before me.

*Pamela Simmons, a 1995 graduate of the University of Western Ontario, is pursuing a career as a freelance writer. She would like to dedicate this article to her grandfather William Robert Wright, who passed away only a few months ago. Her grandfather's love for his family and pride in things Canadian are often a great source of inspiration in her writing and in her life.*

1. Judith Grant, "Women's Studies: Women's Lives," from *Women's Education des femmes*, Volume 10 No 2 Spring 1993, p.11.
2. Jordan Wheeler, "Our Own Stories: A Revolution in Aboriginal Theatre" in *Canadian Theatre Review*, vol.66, Spring 1991, p.10.
3. Monique Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, Toronto: Women's Press, 1993, p.32.

## Post-Secondary Funding: Student Loan Bankruptcy

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by Erica Elison

Canadian women's experience threatens to be that of denied professional futures.

For women in the 1990s, post secondary education is becoming a lottery dream as the financial expenditures of such an investment only promise serious financial indebtedness. The Canadian federal and provincial governments have been reducing and eliminating various student grants, effectively increasing individual student loan debt loads. As governmental financial responsibility is reduced, the question of affordable and accessible post-secondary education for whom becomes paramount. Canadian women's experience threatens to be that of denied professional futures.

Student loan debt loads have substantially increased in the last ten years due to decreasing governmental involvement, specifically with student subsidy programs. In the province of Saskatchewan prior to 1987, students who met the needs assessment criteria qualified for up to \$2380 per academic year (8 months) of non-conditional and non-repayable bursary assistance. Disadvantaged students with "special needs," such as single parents students, qualified for additional grant monies of up to \$3740 per academic year. These bursary monies were granted at the beginning of the school year along with both the Canada and Saskatchewan student loans.

Beginning August 1, 1987, all the money that students received at the beginning of the school year from both Canada and Saskatchewan student loans programs became 100% potentially repayable rather than part loans and part bursaries. Two conditional student

subsidy programs were implemented, the Loan Remission and the Forgivable Loan Plan, whereby students who met all the conditions can have a portion of their loans forgiven. In other words, the government will now "grant" the same amount of monies as prior to 1987 only if the student qualifiedly meets all the conditions. These conditional student subsidy programs have resulted in more students incurring massive student loan debt loads.

### *Les subventions au niveau postsecondaire : la banqueroute du système de prêts aux étudiants*

par Erica Ellson

Dans les années 90, l'enseignement postsecondaire est en passe de devenir un rêve pour les femmes, car les dépenses financières qu'entraînent des études postsecondaires débouchent sur d'importantes dettes. Les gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux se sont délestés de leurs responsabilités financières en éliminant les subventions et les bourses d'études aux étudiants, les paiements de transfert aux provinces et en imposant des calendriers de remboursement pour les prêts d'étudiants qui ne sont ni réalistes ni raisonnables.

Les étudiants, qui n'ont pas les moyens de financer leurs études postsecondaires, dont beaucoup sont des femmes, se voient obliges de contracter d'importantes dettes. Pour les parents célibataires, ces dettes sont supérieures, car ils doivent emprunter de l'argent pour payer leurs dépenses et celles des personnes qu'ils ont à charge. Compte tenu de l'écart existant encore entre les salaires des hommes et ceux des femmes, les responsabilités traditionnelles qu'assument les femmes à l'égard des enfants et des personnes à leur charge et la tendance accrue selon laquelle les femmes occupent des emplois à temps partiel, les femmes en arrivent à payer davantage pour poursuivre les mêmes études que les hommes. Le coût élevé de l'éducation et l'impressionnante dette des prêts aux étudiants, qui est à la hausse, signifient que les femmes continueront de vivre dans la pauvreté qu'elles soient éduquées ou pas.

In the province of Saskatchewan, a single student currently attaining a four year undergraduate degree will incur an estimated combined federal and provincial student loan debt load of \$52,000. This figure includes both principle and accrued interest calculated at 12% for the maximum repayment period of 114 months or 9.5 years. The minimum combined student loan monthly payment is \$767. Individuals who are involved in a common-law or marital relationship in which both persons have student loans to repay face double student loan payments; that is, \$1534 per month for 9.5 years. Further, single parent students, who are most likely to be women, will incur higher student loan debts as these students must borrow monies to pay for the living expenses of their dependents as well as for themselves. A Saskatchewan single parent student currently attaining an undergraduate degree will incur an estimated combined federal and provincial student loan debt load of \$63,500 which must be repaid within 9.5 years. The minimum combined student loan monthly payment is \$936.

A single parent student attaining an undergraduate degree will incur an estimated combined federal and provincial student loan debt load of \$63,500.

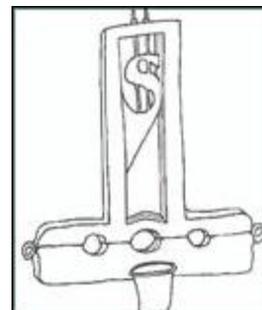
The familial income must first provide for the family's most basic needs - food, shelter, clothing, and childcare-before the repayment of the student loan can even be attempted. Though student loan debt loads have increased to the amount of a house mortgage, the repayment regulations for both the federal and provincial student loan programs have not changed, including the maximum repayment period of 114 months. The result has been a substantial increase in the number of personal bankruptcies that include student loan debts. Individual student loan debtors are literally being forced to file for personal bankruptcy, specifically because of the repayment policies and regulations of both the federal and provincial student loans programs. The student loan debtor has to pay the total principle and accrued interest on combined student loans in less than ten years.

Ironically, the federal government cabinet is currently considering a proposal to amend the federal Bankruptcy Insolvency Act. A time limit of five to ten years would be implemented on student loan debts prior to filing for bankruptcy and student loan debts would not be dischargeable other than for hardship cases as determined by the courts. Such an amendment could be challenged and deemed prejudicial in that no other public nor private creditor has such a legal safeguard on its capital loaned. Even more importantly, the student loan debtor would be seriously at risk. For the five to ten years prior to filing for bankruptcy there would be absolutely no security against creditors' actions, such as the garnishee of wages.

Moreover, Honorable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Human Resources Development, has proposed eliminating federal cash transfer payments to the provinces. The payment of monies equating \$2.6 billion per year are federal grants issued to the provinces to operate post-secondary education institutions. To recover this gross loss of revenues, these institutions will charge exorbitant tuition fees. The Minister has therefore proposed the introduction of an income contingent loan and payment scheme so students can pay the exorbitant fees through repayable student loans. The federal government is decreasing its financial expenditures of post-secondary education through the elimination of the federal cash transfer and at the same time dramatically increasing the costs of post-secondary education to students. The implementation of repayable income contingent loan means that students will bear the loss of revenue previously provided by federal grants.

Students who do not have the independent financial means to finance their post-secondary education, many of whom are women, will be forced to incur an estimated \$48,000 income contingent loan principle over and above the current massive student loan debt loads. The difference is that the repayment of the income contingent loans will be based on the individual's annual income with a maximum repayment period of 30 years.

*Antonia Lancaster*



In essence, student loan debtors will be responsible for repaying three separate student loans: the federal and provincial student loan to be repaid in full (both principle and accrued interest) within the same 114 months and the income contingent loan to be repaid in full (both principle and accrued interest) within 30 years.

Canadian women will begin to question the affordability, and thus accessibility, of post-secondary education. Such increasingly massive student loan debt loads pose a significant psychological and economic barrier to their futures. Due to systemic barriers in employment, women traditionally have lower life-time earnings than men, earning between sixty and seventy percent of what men earn. Women are more commonly employed in lower paid professions, and the unstable labour market, with an increasing trend towards part-time non-standard employment and a high turnover of unemployed university graduates, provides no security for students, especially women. According to the Human Resources Development Branch, female part-time workers tend to be between the ages of 24 and 44 while male part-time workers tend to be 24 and under. And as women continue to bear most responsibility for children and other dependents, their participation within the paid workforce is sporadic. Women consequently pay more than men for the same education due to the accumulated interest over the extended length of time it takes to repay their student loans.

The high cost of post-secondary education and the ever increasing massive student loan debt will mean that Canadian women will continue to be marginalized and will continue to live in poverty whether they are educated or not.

*Erica Elison is a Registered Social Worker and is currently employed as a student advocate at the University of Regina Students' Union.*

**Making Connections: Literacy and ESL  
Materials from a Feminist Perspective**

publication date: Spring 1996

Fifteen women literacy practitioners in a variety of settings across Canada are working with CLOW to produce a manual of lesson plans, sample curricula, materials and resources to be used in literacy and ESL programs. The book, due out in the spring of 1996, will raise awareness and stimulate discussion on topics not usually linked to literacy, such as women's herstory, cross-cultural perspectives on feminism, women role models and gender roles, employment equity, non-traditional jobs, violence against women, and self-esteem. Guidelines on how to present the material and focus the discussion will also be included, as well as suggestions for adapting the material to various settings and levels of learning.

Many of the practitioners working on the project have experienced first-hand the frustration of not having access to interesting material, especially material that relates to the lives of women. In the course of this project, they came together in two consecutive workshops to network, share information, and to define and develop the manual.

A follow-up project has been proposed: to develop and implement support workshops for practitioners on how to make the best use of the manual; how to sensitively introduce, manage, and respond to the information and suggestions for curricula which may be new and challenging.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Growing Bolder: A workbook on growing old and herstory for women in literacy programs*

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by Anne Moore and the Women's Group of Action Read.  
1995 Garlic Press

**Review by Janet Isserlis and Sandy Chuang**

A strong point of the text is the way it integrates skills work (an often dirty word to people in participatory settings) with stories.

**G**rowing Bolder is for literacy learners at multiple levels and with a range of ability in English. It gives learners ample opportunity to learn about health, ageing, women in Canadian herstory, and about themselves. The Women's Group of Action Read has been working together since 1991, learning about reading, writing, women's actions, health storytelling and herstory. This group and their facilitator, Anne Moore, have developed in *Growing Bolder* an important text that is interwoven with numerous skills related to reading, writing and numeracy. The result is a very useful model for all of us working in literacy and language development.

While acknowledging that the book may not meet every woman's learning needs, the authors generously grant permission to copy sections of it for educational settings. Literacy workers and learners can choose topics of interest or exercises that will support their ongoing work within the classroom. A strong point of the text, aside from its content which ranges from herstory, health, elder abuse and celebration of ageing, is in the way it integrates skills work (an often dirty word to people in participatory settings) with stories. Important skills work is contextualized within each section; for example, math exercises are used in interpreting social security data for older women. Language and comprehension questions are designed to generate discussion and further reading and writing.

Sandy Chuang, a learner in a parents' language group at Carnarvon Elementary School in Vancouver, selected readings she thought would appeal to our class, and agreed to write this review with me. She wrote:

"Whenever I get a new book, I usually choose one article which looks more interesting for me to read. If it satisfies me, I keep reading the remaining parts of the book. Otherwise, I give up.

"In this book, *Growing Bolder*, 'Emily Carr' is my first target. Why? When I arrived in Vancouver two years ago, I noticed an elementary school and an art college in Granville Island both named Emily Carr. I guessed Emily Carr must be a famous artist. But what about her age, her life? So, when I found out her name in this book, I was very excited. Finally I knew who she was and learned a little bit about her life.

"Then I continued to read the other stories which, like 'Emily Carr,' also attracted me very much. Personally I prefer real stories to novels and I think these stories help me a lot to understand the Canadian 'herstory. Because, before I read these stories, I had known nothing about the Canadian women from the past. I like reading these stories but I don't like very much the following exercises because some are quite easy (Choose the word, p.32 and p.36) and some require your memorizing the details of the story (Find the missing word, p.35).

"Reading further to Part Two (inviting readers to share their own stories), I found it more interesting than Part One (biographies of notable Canadian women) because we don't need to make up stories but just try to say what we know. As English learners, we have a good chance to practice English by telling the stories of our own and sharing experiences with each other. I like this section most.

"As for the section 'Growing Older,' I like the poems of 'Warning.' I don't think I have the courage to act as the writers say when I get old. Actually I didn't think too much about ageing but these poems make me feel comfortable for getting old. Old people still have a great fun and could create another style of life.

"I like this book. Although it is not huge, it makes me think a lot about us women. I also admire these writers for their effort in editing this book."

Sandy later added that she liked the book because so many of its selections are written by ordinary people. We struggled with the word "ordinary" because none of the women whose work enabled this book to be developed are particularly ordinary at all. But maybe that's the point. *Growing Bolder* is a celebration of the extraordinary in women everywhere.

*Janet Isserlis* has done literacy and English language work with adult refugees and immigrants in the U.S. and Canada since 1980. She is participating in CCLOW's feminist literacy curriculum project. **Sandy Chuang** is a mother of two children and likes to draw cartoons. She is a participant in the parents' group at Carnarvon Community School in Vancouver.

*The women of Action Read* write about themselves: "Our group is an important place where we can be together and enjoy each other. We talk about our problems and what to do about them. We help each other learn to read and write. We wish there were more women's literacy groups out there and that it was easier to get funding."

## Canadian Women's Issues Volume II: Bold Visions

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by Ruth Roach Pierson and Marjorie Griffin Cohen,  
1995 James Lorimer & Company Ltd., \$27.95

**Review by Susan May**

Several articles originally published in *Women's Education des femmes* are included in the chapter on education and training.

*Bold Visions* is about feminist politics and women's struggle, between 1967 and 1994, for a more equitable Canadian society. The book celebrates women's achievements in a variety of spheres including domestic work, paid work, education, economic policy and global initiatives. *Bold Visions* is the second volume of the Canadian Women's Issues series, and it chronicles the ways feminists in English-speaking Canada have brought about social change through bold actions and visions. It complements volume I of the series, covering topics related to the politics of the body, the politics of difference, social policy, the justice system, and culture.

Each chapter in volume II begins with an introductory essay followed by historical documents representing a wonderful collection of women's stories about struggles for equality and improved access to employment and education. I was delighted to read again Judy Syfer's 1971 article, "Why I Want a Wife," in which she angrily and persuasively exposes society's expectation of women's subordination and subservience. I was also happy to be reminded of how much better it is to be a working woman in the 1990s than the 1970s when it was legal for job advertisements to discriminate between "help wanted female" and "help wanted male." As a member of CLOW, I appreciated seeing several articles originally published in *Women's Education des femmes* included in the chapter on education and training, attesting to the relevant and important work undertaken by this feminist organization over the past two decades.

Some of the optimism feminists displayed in previous decades has been eroded. Ruth Pierson and Marjorie Cohen caution us to be wary of the conservative politics at play in the 1990s and to recognize the backlash and the unpopularity of the feminist message. Women's struggle does not get easier and resistance remains strong. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, job and language training for women has not improved and many women's studies and bridging programs have been threatened, if not cut altogether.

Not all the problems experienced by women rest with power elites, however. Throughout the book, the women's movement is criticized for its white middle-class bias and for its insensitivity towards the lived experience of "minority" women. Repeatedly the authors suggest that feminists welcome and incorporate diversity into critiques and activism efforts, and that we work internationally and globally, as well as locally. Black women, poor women, lesbians, women with disabilities and women of colour often have been

excluded. In a document published originally in 1981, Black feminist Carmen Henry contends that, "our white sisters have to address the real issues of the economic racial oppression among non-white women" (p.240). Over ten years later, her call to action remains relevant.

*Bold Visions* will be of interest to teachers, students, community activists and those wanting to understand the present day women's movement in Canada. Not only are the essays themselves thoughtfully presented, the accompanying historical documents make a wonderful addition to personal libraries, and the extensive bibliographies are of interest to those wishing to do further reading. I appreciate how important issues of concern to Canadians have been presented and analyzed, and how Pierson in particular has recorded the feminist movement's development "from a preoccupation with women's issues narrowly and parochially defined to a growing recognition that all issues are women's issues" (p.393).

The authors' commitment to, and experience with, collective and political action enriches the text. Ruth Pierson is a professor of women's history and feminist studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and Marjorie Cohen is an economist who is a professor of women's studies and political science at Simon Fraser University in B.C. Using the voices of feminists over a twenty-seven year period, the authors challenge readers to strengthen their commitment to making Canadian society better than it is. Having read the five chapters and the supporting documents, I feel encouraged to join other feminist to carry on this work-not only through CLOW, but in my educational institution and local community as well.

*Susan May participates on the national board of CLOW as the provincial director from Nova Scotia. She is a faculty member at St. Francis Xavier University in the Master of Adult Education program, and resides in Antigonish.*

Peace and love	Spike Lee
For the music	Holly Near
I hope you enjoy this book given with love	Jane Siberry
Happy reading	Oprah
One of my all-time favorites!	Winfrey
With all good wishes	Anne Murray
	John Kenneth Galbraith

**CLOW's  
3rd Annual  
Celebrity Book Auction**

**May 1996**

**Metro Hall Rotunda  
55 John Street, Toronto**

Books donated and personally inscribed by Canadian and international celebrities, auctioned to the public to raise funds for CCLOW's Mairi St. John Macdonald Scholarship (for women returning to high school). For more information, contact CCLOW in Toronto.

**CCLOW COLUMN**

**Sharing Resources: Collective Fundraising for National Women's Groups**

CCLOW collaborated with nine other national women's groups on a project entitled "Sharing Resources: Developing Models of Collective Fundraising for National Women's Groups." The project entailed researching various fundraising tactics, successes and failures, documenting financial needs, and investigating innovative ideas for collective fundraising such as: workplace giving; establishment of a national, fundraising federation; special events; and real estate investment, including the sharing of office space and administrative equipment and support.

The results of this research have been published in a 338 page report, available from CCLOW for \$30.00 (total). Continued work on this project and its initiatives is ongoing though not presently funded.

**ORGANIZATIONS****Truth Tellers**

Toronto, Ontario

Truth Tellers is a group of feminist survivors rising up against the lies of the "false memory syndrome" foundation. Subscription to their newsletter is available for \$5.00 + \$1.50 postage and handling; feminist and pro-survivor stickers ("Your Silence Will not Protect You," "Don't Let the "FMS"ers Silence Survivors," "Stop Ritual Abuse from Killing Children," etc.) can be purchased for \$1.00/ten stickers + \$.50 postage and handling. Contact Truth Tellers, 489 College Street, Suite 503, Toronto, ON, M6G 1A5.

**Canadian Women's Indexing Group**

CWIG has thoroughly indexed articles of 20 Canadian feminist journals for the years 1972 through 1994. The CWIG database index, which contains 33,000 entries can be searched by subject(s), author's name, title or article or year published. Searches are conducted according to specifications and cost \$40 per search request + mailing costs (\$20 + mailing costs for OISE/U of T students and staff). Photocopies of articles can be provided for \$.50/page + mailing costs. Contact CWIG at the Centre for Women's Studies in Education, OISE, Room 11- 190, 252 Bloor Street W., Toronto, ON, M5S 1V6, tel. (416) 923-6641 ext. 2250 or 2204, fax (416) 926-4725.

**Ontario Breast Cancer Information Exchange Project**

Aurora, Ontario

The goal of the Project is to improve access to information for women, their families and health care providers about breast cancer and related concerns, and to act as a catalyst for breast cancer information organizations and those seeking information to work together. The Project's direction is set by an Advisory Panel, over half of which are breast cancer survivors and family members. Contact OBCIEP, c/o R&R Book Bar, 14800 Yonge Street, Unit 106, Aurora ON, L4G 1N3, tel. (905) 727-3300, fax (905) 727-2620.

**ORGANISMES****Canadian Women's Indexing Group**

Le CWIG a indexé en détailles articles de 20 journaux féministes canadiens parus entre 1972 et 1994. L'index de la base de données, qui comprend 33 000 entrées, peut être fouillé par sujet, nom d'auteur, titre, article ou année de publication. Les recherches sont effectuées selon les spécifications et coûtent 40 \$ la recherche + les frais d'envoi (20 \$ + frais d'envoi pour les étudiants de l'IEPO et de l'Université de Toronto). On peut se procurer des photocopies des articles (50 ¢ la page + frais d'expédition). Contacter l'IEPO au Centre for Women's Studies in Education, IEPO, Salle 11-190, 252, rue Bloor Ouest, Toronto (Ontario) M5S 1V6, téléphone: (416) 923-6641, poste 2250 ou 2204; télécopieur: (416) 926- 4725.

## **Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes**

Montréal (Québec)

L'ICÉA offre des sessions d'information et des journées de formation à l'intention du personnel des organismes qui souhaitent intégrer "Nos compétences fortes" à leur programme régulier de formation. Les séances peuvent être préparées sur mesure et du matériel original complémentaire soutient les activités de formation. "Nos compétences fortes" est une adaptation créative de *Question de compétences, un outil au service des femmes* publié en 1989 par le Centre d'orientation et de formation des femmes en recherche d'emploi, Relais-femmes et l'ICÉA. Veuillez contacter: ICÉA, 5225, rue Berri, bureau 300, Montréal (Québec), H2J 2S4. Téléph. (514) 948-2044, téléc. (514) 948-2046.

## **CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS**

### **Linden School Wanna-be Graduates**

Toronto, Ontario

The Linden school is a private single-sex school where students learn from a structure and curriculum utilizing the most current and credible resources for educating girls. The woman-positive environment empowers its graduates to become full participants in society and to take leadership roles in local, national and international arenas. As a fundraising endeavor, the school is seeking "wanna-be" alumnae, those who wish they could have graduated from such a school environment. The fee is \$100: \$75 tax deductible and \$25 to cover mailing of the school T-shirt and newspaper. Contact The Linden School, 10 Rosehill Avenue, Toronto, ON, M4T 1G5, tel. (416) 966- 4406.

### **Moonprint Press**

Winnipeg, MB

Moonprint is a women's press interested in reading and publishing work written in a style or on topics not seen in mainstream publishing and in voices that speak from marginalized positions whether for reasons of ethnic background, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, etc. Send 10 to 40 typed, numbered, double-spaced pages with a cover letter, and self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage if you would like your manuscript returned. We accept poetry, short fiction and personal essays. Send submissions to Moonprint Press, P.O. Box 293, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 2G9.

### **Locating Feminisms**

Brown University, Providence, RI

Papers that debate what defines feminism and the current place of feminist theory and practice in racial, queer, ethnic, class, and ability politics are invited for this interdisciplinary graduate student conference to be held March 1-2, 1996. Submit two copies of a 1 page abstract, e-mail address, and phone number by **January 5** to Locating Feminisms, Box 1958, Brown University, Providence, RI, 02912, USA.

## AWARDS

### **James Rogers Memorial Bursary**

Workers' Educational Association of Canada

Three \$500 bursaries will be awarded annually to help adults get into or continue participation in a basic education, upgrading, skills training, certification course or other adult education program. The bursary funds can be used to cover tuition or related educational expenses, such as basic living or child care costs. Bursary applicants must: be a Canadian citizen, landed immigrant, or convention refugee; live in Ontario; be in or accepted into a full- or part-time adult education program; have an educational plan with identified educational or employment goals; supply two personal references; and be ineligible for OSAP. Applications for 1996 are available from The Workers' Educational Association of Canada, 736 Bathurst Street, Unit #3, Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4.

## FILM/VIDEO

### **Social Justice/Human Rights Video Collection**

National Film Board

The NFB has produced a catalogue of films on justice and human rights issues, such as war and peace, human rights abuse, racism/anti-racism, Native issues, children's rights, women's issues, homosexuality and homophobia, poverty, etc. For copies of the catalogue, contact the NFB at (514) 283-9453 or write to Promotions, D-5, P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville, Montréal, PQ, H3C 3H5, fax (514) 496-2573.

### **You Deserve to be Safe**

DAWN Ontario

This video features girls with disabilities sharing their personal views and experiences on the problems of violence and abuse. A companion guide book is also available. Video: \$20; Guidebook \$3; Video & Book \$22. Contact DAWN Ontario publications, 180 Dundas Street W., Suite 210, Toronto, ON, M5G 1Z8. 1-800-561-4727 or (416) 598-2488, fax (416) 598-2433, TTY (416) 598-2462.

### **Women and Substance Abuse: Sharing Our Experiences**

Canadian Public Health Association

This video explores links between substance abuse and sexual health, mental health and violence, and identifies pressures unique to each life stage (adolescence, young adulthood, mid- adulthood and senior years). Contact: Canadian Public Health Association, 1565 Carling Ave., Suite 400, Ottawa, ON, K1Z 8R1, (613) 725-3769, fax (613) 725- 9826.

## FILM/VIDÉO

## **Les aventures de Kiri le pingouin/ Dinosabella**

TVMC International Inc.

Ces deux films animés, couleur, d'environ 77 min., sont pour les enfants. **Les aventures de Kiri le pingouin** prend place en Antarctique où Kiri et ses amis Crystal et Louis, capturés par des chasseurs, sont aidés par un chien nommé Cow-Boy. **Dinosabella**, un adorable monstre marin rose, habite avec les habitants d'une magnifique île dans le sud du Pacifique. Sa tâche est de protéger l'île et d'aider Toby, un jeune garçon qui a fait naufrage. On peut acheter les deux pour 24,99 \$ (tout inclus) ou seulement qu'un des deux pour 15,99 \$ (tout inclus). Livraison 4 à 6 semaines. Envoyer chèque ou mandat-poste à TVMC International Inc. 1344 Sherbrooke est, Montréal (Québec), H2L 1M2.

## **BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS**

### **Girls and Schooling: their own critique/ From the Inside Out: On first teaching women's literature and feminist criticism**

OISE, Centre for Women's Studies  
252 Bloor Street West Toronto, ON,  
M5S 1V6

Two new publications from the Centre for Women's Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. A publications list is also available.

### **Gender and the Law: an introductory handbook for law students**

National Association of Women and the Law  
604, 1 Nicholas Street  
Ottawa, ON, K1N 7B7  
(613) 241-7570  
(613) 241-4657 fax

This collection of short articles provides an introduction to feminist legal thought, practical strategies and alternatives for promoting equality in legal education, and analysis of the impacts of the law and legal education upon Native women, women with disabilities, visible minority women, lesbians and women who are poor. \$6 each (members), \$7.50 (non-members) + postage and handling; discounts for orders of 10 or more.

### **A Narrow Doorway: women's stories of escape from abuse**

General Store Publishing House  
1 Main Street  
Burnstown, ON, K0J 1G0  
1-800-465-6072  
(613) 432-7184 fax

This collection by Fern Martin of 10 stories from women who came to Lanark County

Interval House in eastern Ontario graphically delineates the variety and extent of spousal abuse, and the narrow doorway through which escape is possible. \$18.95 ea. + \$4.50 GST shipping and handling.

**Nothing but the Girl**

Cassell US  
215 Park Avenue South  
New York, NY 10003  
U.S.A.

Edited by Susie Bright and Jill Posener, this collection of 150 black and white lesbian erotic photographs includes commentary from photographers on issues that have affected their work such as their families, coming out, lesbian sex, S/M, feminist sex debates, pornography, etc. \$29.95 (US), 112 pp. Order from the publisher or local bookseller.

**The Queer Activists Handbook**

Cassell US (see above)

This book by activist Fernando Guasch provides analysis and commentary on the discrimination of queers in contemporary political, social, and cultural life. \$60 (US) hardcover, \$16.95 (US) paperback, 160 pp.

**Reclaiming Body Territory**

CRIAW  
151 Slater Street, #408  
Ottawa, ON, K1P 5H3

CRIAW paper No. 25 by Si Transken is an academic and experiential documentation of the reclaiming of her body after more than a decade of sexual and physical assault by her father and subsequent 15 years of recovery. Includes an examination of the male-centred and profit-oriented world that makes sustained abuse possible and recovery difficult.

**Repositioning feminism & education: perspectives on educating for social change**

Greenwood Publishing Group  
88 Post Road West, P.O. Box 5007  
Westport, CT  
06881-5007 USA  
1-800-225-5800  
(203) 222-1502 fax

This book by Janice Jipson, Petra Munro, Susan Victor, Karen Froude Jones and Gretchen Freed-Rowland chronicles their collaborative efforts to take up the work of transformation without reinscribing systems of domination. The struggle with the concept of imposition provides a site for exploring the complex relationship between power, knowledge and

teacher identity. \$59.95 (US) hardcover, \$19.95 (US) paperback, 296 pp.

**From Blackboards to Keyboards: the fragile link between women's education and employment / Final Report: women and global economic restructuring**

North South Institute  
55 Murray Street, Suite 200  
Ottawa, ON, K1N 5M3  
(613) 241-3535  
(613) 241-7435 fax  
[NSI@web.apc.org](mailto:NSI@web.apc.org)

**From Blackboards to Keyboards (\$12)**

examines experiences in 18 Asia Pacific countries and the need for a direct link between increasing levels of women's education and productive employment. **Final Report** (\$10) contains key recommendations from gender experts who met in preparation for the Beijing conference. Other publications are available from the Institute.

**Making Change: Raising awareness about violence against women as a barrier to women's education**

CLOW  
47 Main Street  
Toronto, ON, M4E 2V6  
(416) 699-1909  
(416) 699-2145 fax  
[cclow@web.apc.org](mailto:cclow@web.apc.org)

This series of two booklets (**Violence: a barrier to your learning, An Educator's Guide to Creating Safe Learning**) and three fact sheets (**Colleges & Universities: taking action against violence, When Women Talk About Violence What Should I Say?, You Can Make a Difference: practical suggestions for high school educators**) by Lisa Rundle and Nicki Scott are intended for use by students, teachers, counsellors, administrators, etc., to raise awareness of violence as a barrier to education and to provide practical suggestions and strategies \$3.00/package (booklets and fact sheets) or \$1.50 booklet + GST, postage & handling. To obtain just the fact sheets send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

**Educational Campaign to Combat Date and Acquaintance Rape**

Centre for Women's Studies, OISE,  
252 Bloor Street W.  
Toronto, ON, M5S 1V6  
(416) 923-6641, ext. 2368  
(416) 926-4725 fax

These kits, produced to combat date and acquaintance rape on college and university campuses, include a manual for educators and administrators, an educator's guide, annotated bibliography, audio-visual resource list, community resource list, button, decal,

pamphlets for female and male students and posters. \$40 (all inclusive). Some components available separately.

**Uncommon Knowledge: A critical guide to contraception and reproductive technologies**

Women's Health Interaction and Inter Pares  
58 Arthur Street  
Ottawa, ON, K1R 7B9

This booklet is a set of fact sheets that describe and analyze, within a feminist framework, technologies and methods that inhibit or promote fertility including Depo Provera, Norplant, IUDs, IVF, RU486, etc. The analysis is derived from both northern and southern women's experiences and the information is intended for use by professional health care workers and the women they serve. \$10 (\$8 for ten or more). 85 pp.

**Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador**

Creative Book Publishing  
P.O. Box 8660  
St. John's, NF, A1B 3T7  
(709) 722-8500  
(709) 722-2228 fax

Edited by Carmelita McGrath, Barbara Neis, and Marilyn Porter, this anthology captures the experiences of women in Newfoundland and Labrador from the 19th century fishery to reproductive choice in the 1990s.

**Rural Women, Literacy and Participation in Economic Development**

Centre for the Study of Training, Investment and Economic Restructuring Carleton University  
1125 Promenade Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, ON, K1S 5B6  
(613) 788-5792  
(613) 788-3561 fax

This working paper by Justine Foxall examines how the training proposed in labour adjustment policies does not favor vulnerable groups such as rural women or those whose literacy is inadequate for new job requirements. It looks at the situation of rural women in eastern Ontario, how they already contribute to the revitalization of rural economies, and the additional support that would help them expand their literacy abilities.

**Latin American Women: Compared Figures**

Canadian Foundation for the Americas  
230, 55 Murray Street  
Ottawa, ON, K1N 5M3  
(613) 562-0005

(613) 562-2525 fax

Published by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales of Chile, this publication offers compared data on the situation of women in 19 countries of Central and South America. It documents both the progress women have made and the deep inequalities that persist compared to men, and between women within countries and regions.

**Workplace Harassment Action Guide for Women**

Workers' Information and Action Centre  
102, 277 Victoria Street  
Toronto, ON, M5B 1W2  
(416) 392-1203  
(416) 392-1083 fax

This guide is easy to read and offers information to women who are, or fear, being harassed whether they work in a restaurant, school, private home, hospital or office, etc. Taken from real life experiences, the guide outlines where to go, who to talk to, and the options available under criminal law, labour law and human rights legislation and includes an Ontario-wide list of resources and agencies. Currently available free of charge from WIAC.

**Gendered Education: Sociological reflections on women, teaching and feminism**

OISE Press, Scholarly Book Services Inc.  
403, 77 Mowat Avenue  
Toronto, ON, M6K 3E3  
(416) 533-5490  
(416) 533-5652 fax

This book by Sandra Acker looks at the invisibilities and inequities in the sociology of education, the careers of female teachers and the experiences of female academics. Acker examines the development of the sociology of women's education and assesses the contributions of feminist research and theory to educational enquiry. \$26.50, 198 pp.

**Gender In/forms Curriculum: From Enrichment to Transformation**

OISE Press  
(see above)

Edited by Jane Gaskell and John Willinsky, this book looks at issues of gender equity in education theory and curriculum and the inherently gendered nature of knowledge. Contributors include Annette Henry, Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell, Kathleen Rockhill and Patricia Tomic, Arlene McLaren, Jane Roland Martin, etc. \$26.50, 298 pp.

**Survival Skills for Women: A Manual for Facilitators**

Learning Development Service  
Richmond Campus  
Kwantlen University College

P.O. Box 9030  
Surrey, BC, V3W 2M8

The 1995 edition of this manual includes modules on Building Self Esteem, Stress Management, and Assertiveness Training; additional modules will include Personal Safety, Gender Communications, Intercultural Communication, and Developing Leadership Skills. \$75.

**The Resource Directory of Disabled Student Services at Canadian Universities and Colleges**

NEADS  
4th Level Unicentre  
Carleton University  
Ottawa, ON, K1S 5B6

Published by the National Education Association for Disabled Students in 1993. \$20 (members), \$30 (non-members).

**Strategies for the Year 2000: A woman's handbook**

Fernwood Books  
Box 9409, Station A  
Halifax, NS, B3K 5S3  
(902) 422-3302  
(902) 422-3179 fax  
[Errol\\_Sharpe@Dart.Matthewsmicro.ns.ca](mailto:Errol_Sharpe@Dart.Matthewsmicro.ns.ca)

Deborah Steinstra and Barbara Roberts detail the terms of the two international agreements Canada signed during the UN Decade for Women, assess the progress of provincial, territorial and federal governments and provide a how-to manual on evaluating the progress made by various governments in implementing women's equality obligations incurred by the agreements. \$11.95 + \$2.50 shipping & handling + 7% GST.

**Women Matter: Gender, Development and Policy**

Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women  
Newfoundland and Labrador  
131 LeMarchant Road  
St. John's, NF, A1C 2H3  
(709) 753-7270  
(709) 753-2606 fax  
[pacsw@nlnet.nf.ca](mailto:pacsw@nlnet.nf.ca)

Researched and written by Martha Muzychka and motivated by an analysis of how the cod moratorium has affected women, this paper defines gender analysis and feminist perspectives, gives detailed examples of the difference a gender perspective brings to current issues, and offers a model for the practical application of a gender and feminist

analysis.

**1995 Resource Handbook**

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario  
124 Merton Street, 3rd Floor  
Toronto, ON, M4S 2Z2

This handbook lists available services such as assessment, education, counselling, treatment, and health, legal, vocational social and recreational assistance. A valuable tool for parents, persons with learning disabilities, professionals, and community workers. \$25 (members), \$30 (non-members) + \$3 postage & handling + 7% GST on total.

**Young Women Talk Dis/Ability**

The Moment Project  
Jesuit Centre for Social Faith & Justice  
947 Queen Street East  
Toronto, ON, M4M 1J9  
(416) 469-1123  
(416) 469-3579 fax

Aimed at girls and young women between the ages of 12 and 22, this publication covers school, employment, violence, dating, appearance, and includes personal profiles and picture stories addressing issues facing young women with disabilities.

**Where There is Life, There is Hope: women literacy students and discrimination**

Literacy & Continuing Education Branch  
Department of Education and Training  
107, 340 Ninth Street  
Brandon, MB, R7A 6C2  
1-800-262-3930  
(204) 726-6583 fax

Copies of this resource, written by the Samaritan House PAR Group, can be obtained for \$5 ea.

**Super RA Survivor Fights the CRAP!**

Cheryl WaterWomon & Co.  
P.O. Box 42, Stn E  
Toronto, ON, M6H 4E1

Written and drawn by Cheryl WaterWomon, this 12 page comic details the adventures of Super RA (ritual abuse) Survivor as she fights the CRAP (CuIts, Rapists and Abusers Protection Foundation). \$5 ea. + 1.50 postage & handling.

**LIVRES/PUBLICATIONS**

**Études des programmes d'aide financière destinés aux étudiant-e-s handicapés de niveau postsecondaire**

NEADS  
4<sup>e</sup> Unicentre  
Université Carleton  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1S 5B6

L'objectif de ce rapport est de donner des renseignements pour mieux répondre à l'avenir aux besoins de chaque personne. 10 \$ (membres); 15 \$ (non membres).

**Une campagne d'éducation pour combattre l'agression sexuelle**

Centre for Women's Studies in Education IPEO  
252, rue Bloor ouest  
Toronto (ON) M5S 1V6

Préparée pour combattre l'agression sexuelle dans les fréquentations et les relations d'amitié dans les campus collégiaux et universitaires, cette trousse pose le problème, traite des contextes locaux et globaux, explique la façon dont la vie des jeunes femmes et des jeunes hommes est affectée et ce qu'il faut faire. 20\$. On peut se procurer le vidéo pour 10\$.

**Les femmes au Canada**

Statistique Canada  
1-800-517-8374

Statistique Canada a publié la troisième édition de l'ouvrage qui offre une vue globale de la population féminine du pays. Ce portrait de 180 pages traite des divers aspects de la vie des femmes et comporte des sections distinctes sur les immigrantes, les membres de minorités visible, les autochtones et celles ayant une incapacité. 49 \$ + TPS.

**Devenir: Approche éducative en développement de carrière au féminin**

Distribution Univers  
845, rue Marie-Victorin  
Saint-Nicolas (Québec) G0S 3L0  
1-800-859-7474  
(418) 831-4021 téléc.

Un atelier d'orientation s'adressant aux jeune femmes, ce programme propose une approche novatrice en counseling de carrière qui a pris forme dans la foulée de travaux de recherche réalisés par une équipe de l'Université Laval. 23,00 \$.

**Travailler, mais à quel prix!**

Groupe de recherche multidisciplinaire féministe  
bur 3800, Édifice Jean-Durand

Université Laval  
Québec, G1K 7P4

72 travailleuses témoignent de la violence faite aux femmes dans des milieux de travail syndiqués au Québec.

**Femmes et religions**

Distribution Univers  
845, rue Marie-Victorin  
Saint-Nicolas (Québec) G0S 3L0  
1-800-858-7474  
(418) 831-4021

Sous la direction de Denise Veillette, ce livre présente des analyses et des témoignages sur quatre thèmes: la remise en question du caractère patriarcal de la religion; la sociohistoire de fondatrices et de religieuses de communauté; la lecture des attitudes et des discours de femmes engagées dans l'Église catholique romaine; et l'analyse de pratiques religieuses. 35 \$, 488 pages.

**L'avenir financier des femmes: Comment envisager la retraite au mitan de la vie**  
Conseil consultatif canadien sur la situation de la femme

Selon une étude diffusée par le Conseil consultatif canadien sur la situation de la femme, bien des femmes aujourd'hui âgées de 45 à 54 an toucheront un maigre revenu au moment de la retraite. Cette étude, par Monica Townson, est l'un des derniers documents produit par le Conseil, dont le mandat s'est terminé le 1<sup>er</sup> avril.

**Mise à jour de la place des femmes en formation professionnelle dans l'ensemble de l'éducation des adultes**

Conseil du statut de la femme  
Service de la production et de la diffusion  
8, rue Cook, 3<sup>e</sup> étage  
Québec (Québec) G1R 5J7  
1-800-463-2851  
(418) 643-8926 téléc.

L'analyse de la situation présente une vue d'ensemble de la place occupée par les femmes et les hommes en formation professionnelle au secondaire et au collégial, les divers cours suivis par les femmes et les hommes au sein des deux programmes offerts au collégial, ainsi que la place des femmes dans le programme d'attestation d'études collégiales et celui du certificat d'études collégiales.

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- Individual \$30.70
- Sustaining Member \$250.70
- Organization with an annual budget up to \$100, 000 \$48.25
- Organization with an annual budget \$100, 000 to \$500, \$80.25
- Organization with an annual budget over \$500, 000 \$133.75

Associate Member (receives *Women's Education des Femmes* only)

- Individual \$18.19
- Organization \$32.10

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 \* \* Un reçu de 240,00 \$ aux fins de l'impôt sera remis.

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# AGENDA

## **Workshops for Women**

The Women's Centre, Douglas College December 1995, New Westminster, B.C.

The Women's Centre of Douglas College runs workshops throughout the school year for women attending or interested in attending the College. Those in December include Montreal Massacre vigil, **December 6**, and Talking Circle, **December 21**. For more information or to reserve a place in the workshop, call (604) 527-5486.

## **6th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women**

April 22-26, 1996, Adelaide, Australia

The Congress, held every three years since 1981, aims to bring together scholars and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines. Themes for the 6th Congress include Global Restructuring, Women's Studies, Feminist Politics, Health and Sexuality, After Cairo, Copenhagen & Beijing, Community Education, etc. Contact Festival City Conventions, P.O. Box 986, Kent Town, South Australia, 5071. Tel. 61-8-363-1307, fax 61-8-363-1604.

## **Fourth Women's Global Leadership Institute**

Center for Women's Global Leadership June 10-23, 1996, New Brunswick, N.J.

Women from all regions of the world are welcome to participate in the two-week Institute which will focus on connections between human rights and violence against women including violations of women's reproductive and socio-economic rights. Participants should have worked on these issues or related concerns for at least two years in either professional or volunteer capacities. The Institute seeks to strengthen women's human rights movements around the world, and to make human rights law and mechanisms more accessible. For an application or more information, contact Susana Fried, Institute Coordinator, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Douglass College, 27 Clifton Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ, 08903, USA, tel. (908) 932-8782, fax (908) 932-1180, e-mail [cwgl@igc.apc.org](mailto:cwgl@igc.apc.org).

## **Women and Sexuality**

Department of Family Studies, University of Guelph June 17-19, 1996, Guelph, ON

The focus of the 18th annual Guelph Conference and Training Institute on Sexuality is women's sexuality. The aim of the conference is to help participants better understand the relationship and sexual problems facing our society. Pre-conference workshops run from June 15-17 and post-conference workshops run from June 21-21. Contact the Office of Open Learning, University of Guelph, Guelph, ON, N1G 2W1, tel. (519) 767-5000, fax (519) 767-1114.

## CLOW



The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CLOW) was founded in 1979 and is a national, voluntary, feminist organization with networks in every province and territory. CLOW advocates equality between women and men by promoting equal participation in our educational, political, economic, legal, social and cultural systems. To overcome discrimination based on gender, age, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, CLOW focuses on improving educational and learning systems. Our work and research includes maintaining a Women's Learning Resource Centre, publishing a quarterly magazine (*Women's Éducation des femmes*), advocacy, program development in local areas and involvement in educational - related activities and events.

## CCPEF



Le Congrès canadien pour la promotion des études chez la femme (CCPEF) a été fondé en 1979. C'est un organisme national, bénévole et féministe qui a des réseaux dans chaque province et territoire. Le CCPEF prône l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes en promouvant une participation égale de tous et de toutes à notre système éducatif, politique, économique, judiciaire, social et culturel. Pour surmonter la discrimination qui se fonde sur le sexe, l'âge, la race, la classe sociale, les caractères ethniques et l'orientation sexuelle, le CCPEF s'attache à perfectionner le système éducatif et celui de l'apprentissage des femmes, publie une revue trimestrielle *Women's Éducation des femmes*, se fait le défenseur des femmes, s'occupe d'élaborer des programmes dans différentes régions du pays et participe à des activités et à des manifestations dans le domaine de l'éducation.

